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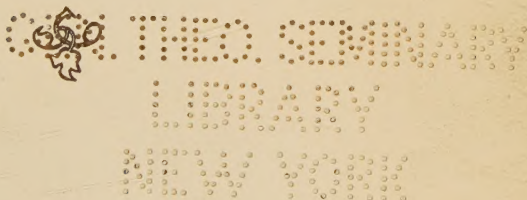
St. Ignatius' Pulpit



BY THE

Rev. ARTHUR RITCHIE

Rector of St. Ignatius' Church, New York



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CONTENTS

THE PROMISE TO GOD'S PEOPLE. <i>Jer. xxiii. 7, 8</i>	- -	5
THE HOLY SCRIPTURE. <i>St. Luke xxi. 33</i>	- - - -	17
A HIGHWAY FOR OUR GOD. <i>Is. xl. 3-5</i>	- - - -	29
THE FREEDOM OF THE GOSPEL. <i>Ps. xxxii. 1, 2</i>	- - -	42
THE SERVANTS KNEW. <i>St. John ii. 9</i>	- - - -	54
THE SOWER AND THE SEED. <i>Phil. ii. 12, 13</i>	- - -	66
SINFUL LUSTS OF THE FLESH. <i>I. Thess. iv. 7, 8</i>	- -	78
THE OVERCOMING OF THE WORLD. <i>I. St. John v. 4, 5</i>		90
THE REPROVING OF THE WORLD BY THE HOLY GHOST.		
<i>St. John xvi. 8-11</i>	- - - - -	102
NEEDING NOT TO ASK. <i>St. John xxi. 12</i>	- - - -	115
PARTED FROM THEM AND CARRIED UP. <i>St. Luke</i>		
<i>xxiv. 51</i>	- - - - -	126
THE ASCENDED LORD. <i>St. John xiv. 2</i>	- - - -	139
GOD AND MAN. <i>Job xi. 7</i>	- - - -	150
DIVES AND LAZARUS. <i>St. Luke xvi. 22, 23</i>	- - - -	161
THE SHEPHERD AND THE FOLD. <i>St. John x. 11</i>	- -	173
THE UNITY OF LOVE. <i>Ps. cxxxiii.</i>	- - - -	186
UNABLE TO DO WHAT WE WOULD. <i>Gal. v. 17</i>	- - -	199
THOU BEING OUR RULER AND GUIDE. <i>St. Luke vi. 38</i>		212
THE PROPORTION OF FAITH. <i>Rom. xii. 6</i>	- - -	224
A RIGHT FAITH. <i>St. Matt. xvi. 17</i>	- - - -	237
TAKING UP ONE'S BED. <i>St. Matt. ix. 6</i>	- - - -	250
WORKING, WEAPON IN HAND. <i>Nehemiah iv. 17</i>	- -	263
MESSENGERS AND MINISTERS. <i>Ps. civ. 4</i>	- - - -	274
THE WAY OF BEATITUDE. <i>Ps. lxxxiv. 7</i>	- - - -	286



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THE PROMISE TO GOD'S PEOPLE

"Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, the Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt: but, the Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land."—(Jer. xxiii. 7, 8.)

BLIND and deaf to all the warnings of the prophets, the Jews of ancient days went on in their shameless sins, their outrageous idolatries, their utter neglect of God's law, until His patience with them was exhausted, and He gave them up into the hand of the king of Babylon, who carried them away captive beyond the Euphrates. It was a blessed season, however, in Israel's history, that time of captivity in Babylon; for it brought out such splendid heroic characters as that of Daniel, and the three holy children who were cast into the burning fiery furnace because they would not worship King Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. In those days of captivity how eagerly must the earnest men among the Jews have

cherished the prophecies, which had foretold indeed just this sad plight into which the people had fallen because of their sins, but which foretold also that after seventy years God would have pity upon them, and restore them to their own land. So Jeremiah had sung in the words of our text. The deliverance which was to come to the children of Israel in these later days was to be so much greater and more signal in character than that which their fathers had experienced after their long stay in Egypt, that the prophet declares that men should no longer say, "The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them." This north country was Chaldea or Babylonia, where they remained for seventy years as captives, and the other countries may well be thought of generally as those to which the people fled to escape the host of the king of Babylon, as Egypt and Zidonia, and the land of Edom.

I. Very beautiful and gracious is the promise which God holds out in the words of the prophet to His long dispersed sheep. They are to be safely restored to their own land. It shall be prosperous and fertile as of old. They shall dwell there in abundance and in security; none shall make them afraid. The Most High will set over them wise and upright kings, who, as kind shepherds, shall feed the flock of God with wisdom and holiness. And then, to crown all, He will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and His

name whereby He shall be called is, "The Lord our Righteousness." This is plainly the Messiah, as the Jews all understood, though of course they could not at that time grasp the notion of His divinity.

II. It was a magnificent promise, and does not seem to be made conditionally. Yet we know well enough, and the Jews knew it equally well, that all of the divine promises are conditional, so far as individuals are concerned, upon their loyalty. God will work out His gracious purpose, and no man may let it, yet He may work it out by fulfilling the promise upon the spiritual Israel and not upon Israel after the flesh; though, indeed, Israel after the flesh should have truly inherited all the good things foretold had they not forfeited them by shameful disloyalty to God. We naturally go on in our thought and spiritualize the whole prophecy, which of course is right enough, for every prophecy must have its larger spiritual application, as well as that which is more immediate.

(1) God drove forth His people from paradise when they sinned. It was the great expulsion which our first parents knew. The third chapter of Genesis which tells us the melancholy story of the fall, ends thus: "So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." Again, in the next chapter in Genesis, we read the lament of Cain after God has come to punish him for the murder of his brother: "Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth." To be sure, the Hebrew words for

driving out in these passages are not the same as in Jeremiah's prophecy, yet the meaning is not practically different. God is compelled by man's sin to drive him out of the realms of holiness, not indeed that He may wreck the creature's life hopelessly, but that that creature may by reason of his misery in his exile, turn back to his Creator in penitence and be saved. And when God promises salvation to the sinful human creature, it is always upon the condition that the human creature truly repents and desires to be taken back into favour. The result of the driving forth was man's own surrender of himself to Satan, and that determined the land in which he found himself, as if driven forth by God into it.

(2) First, it is the *north* country. The north is ever in Scripture the type of Satan's realm, dark, drear, inhospitable. The armies of the north are symbolical of the hosts of Satan; the north is the stronghold of that Evil One. So in Isaiah he is represented as saying: "I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north." The literal north country for the Jew was Chaldea, where the dreaded Babylonian reigned. The spiritual north country is the land of sin, of superstition and ignorance, and brutal folly. It was into the deplorable north country of darkness and sin that man was driven, by his own transgression, when he was expelled from paradise. It is from this north country of darkness and sin that God will bring back His people at the last day.

(3) But the prophet speaks also of other countries into which the people of God had been driven

for their sin. One may legitimately understand these other countries to be those at the other points of the compass, and following mystical analogies, we shall take the *south* country to be the land of sensuality and fleshly appetite of every sort. The south is naturally associated in our minds with luxury and with passion. So into the land of sensuality God may be said to have driven man, inasmuch as He sent him forth from paradise to follow the leadings of his own perverse will, and these brought him into the realm of the lust of the flesh.

Again, there is the *west* country, which, with the movement of the world's civilization, stands for money getting, the pursuit of wealth, the love of this world's possessions. How far into the west have God's human creatures been driven by their forgetfulness of Him, and their disobedience to His will! For there is no more widespread mischief in the world than this sin of covetousness. For the love of money, says the Apostle, is the root of all evil. But God is at the last to bring back His people from the west country as well as from the north and from the south. Yet, once more, there is the land of the *east*, with all its grand traditions, its venerable beliefs and superstitions. In what contempt the hoary eastern nations hold our western world; with its rush of novelty, its passion for change! The east stands for pride and self-sufficiency; the nations of the east are the last that shall submit themselves to the yoke of the Gospel, because it is too humbling to their pride. So did God in driving forth His people, as the consequence of their sin, suffer them to betake themselves

to the east, that is, to be lifted up with pride and self-importance. There is no stumbling block in all our religion like that which is set up by its teachings concerning humility and meekness. Many a devout believer in all other respects is in grievous peril of hell to-day, because he will not surrender his pride.

(4) From all these countries whither He has driven them, God is going to cause His people to return at the last, in order that they may dwell in their own land. Not that all the exiles are to be brought back. It may not, alas, be so, because they shall not want to return. They shall have found the countries of their banishment so pleasant that they will not hearken to the voice of the gentle Christ calling on them to return into their own land. Is it not most true that the majority of mankind is content still to dwell in the north country of darkness and ignorance of the things of God, in the south country of sensuality, in the west country of covetousness, in the east country of pride? Nevertheless, God will not be thwarted of His purpose. Though there may be many that are lost, there are many to be saved, a great multitude which no man can number, brought back to the celestial fatherland, the true Eden whence Adam was spiritually banished, in which they shall dwell eternally in abundance, in security, though not indeed in hope—for then hope shall have given way to fruition—but in the joyous vision of God.

III. There is no doubt much of profit in the study of the prophecies of God to the disciple in their temporal fulfilment for the Jewish people of old time, and in their application to the conditions which

are to be at the end of the world, when the Master shall descend in glory to take the Kingdom and deliver it up to His Father. Yet you and I feel that we should like to find always some present application of the prophecies to the case of our own lives. There is no reason why we should not do this, for they have realization for every age on to the end of time, so rich and exhaustlessly full are the divine promises to the faithful. Therefore as the Epistle is read to-day we may be sure that it has a very blessed and satisfying meaning for ourselves. The prophet cries, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord." We are sure that they have come, they are here. We have been brought back from the north country, and from all countries whither we have been driven by reason of our sins; from the north country of wilful transgression and conscious disobedience, to the divine will; from the south country of lustful desire; from the west country of love of this world's things; and from the east country of our selfishness and pride; in order that we might dwell in our own good land, that is God's holy Church, as faithful and true members of Christ. I am assuming, you perceive, that all who hear me are honest professing Christians, who acknowledge their duty as belonging to the Church, and are endeavouring, with greater or less persistency, to do it. I would have you then recognize the goodness of our heritage.

(1) We have been brought back to a land of *abundance*, a land where spiritual prosperity reigns. As God promised Israel of old that He would give

them a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey, of vines, and olives and fig trees, of brooks of water and abundant springs, a land in which they should not lack anything; so also has He promised us concerning the spiritual wealth of the Church in which we have inheritance. Human nature is very apt to dwell upon the hardness of the Christian service, yet that is all wrong. We are indeed called to give up many things if we would be good servants of our Lord, but let us hear what He Himself says about that in one of those fine, strong, stern passages of the Gospel, as we find it in St. Mark: "Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." How sharply that word *persecutions* comes in here, yet too, as if it were a matter not worthy of serious weight in comparison of all the rest. Are such words as these of the Master's indeed to be practically realized by the believer? It is true that very few in these days have to surrender the earthly ties of blood and relationship in order to be true to the Master, yet when that was a common experience in the early Christian world, men have testified over and over again that they found the Master's saying true. The society of the faithful, the companionship of saints, these were better ties of affection than those of this world. But the strong case is put in order that we

may bring home to ourselves the absolute truthfulness of the Master's promise, that in His service we gain an hundred-fold more than we are asked to surrender, even while we are here in this present world. There are very few Christians who believe that; they say, such has not been my experience. I am willing to surrender things for my Master, and to live a hard life here, for the sake of pleasing Him, and for the hope of heaven; but I am not prepared to say that I have found compensations for so doing in His service. There are a great many Christians who go through life pitying themselves for the hardness which their loyalty to their religion entails, and in their hearts rather pluming themselves on the slow martyrdom of their earthly days. Such people have not grasped the meaning of their Christian privilege. Is it nothing to be allowed to have part in such worship as that of the divine Eucharist, to be brought into the very presence of the Most High God, as if admitted to His court in the heavens? One may say, That is no doubt true, but I cannot realize it, and therefore it does not make me glad. But does faith then go for nothing? I believe that that is the fatal defect in a very great part of our religion to-day, that we ignore faith, we will not be satisfied that anything is real unless we can make it real to our imagination, or in some way apprehend it by our senses. God's word for a thing ought not only to make it sure as calling for our immediate obedience, but also as satisfying the craving of our hearts. I say, then, that we have in our blessed religion an hundred-fold more than anything the world could give us to make

us glad, the divine worship of the Eucharist, with the unspeakably solemn, yet most joyous power of receiving Holy Communion; and as an ever present reality the power of prayer, whereby, in an instant, as it were, we can uplift ourselves into heaven itself, and at the foot of the throne have audience just so long as we will—we are the ones who always terminate it—with the Almighty Himself.

(2) Again, we have been brought back by our religion to *peace*. None is to make us afraid. The Master said, "Peace, I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." One may say, But, I do not have peace, I am perpetually worried and disquieted with all sorts of things. What things? Well, the temporal things of my dear ones and my own, the trouble of this world, and all its anxieties. That is one's own fault wherever it exists, for it is the grossest failure in faith again. Our religion of course will not help us if we are not willing to obey its behests. One of its first principles is that we should not be anxious for the morrow, but leave everything in the divine hands. Why should we seek to obey our Lord in anything when we are not willing to trust Him to care for our temporal necessities? Yes, you reply, but one feels so unworthy, one is afraid that he has forfeited the Master's grace and help. If one feels unworthy it must be on account of sin, for sin is the only possible thing that can cause us to forfeit the divine favour. And it is pre-eminently the glory and the business of our religion to relieve us from sin. That is why peace, and the sense of security are such great treasures of life in the Church. We can

definitely and wholly put away our sin if we will. You know that the confessional stands just for this. There are two sorts of peace which may belong to the human creature here in this world. The first sort comes from a dead or sleeping conscience, which is untroubled because one does not care; the other, from a good conscience, purged by repentance, and made flawless in the sight of God. It is no small thing to have been brought back from the north country, and from all other countries, to find in one's own land perfect peace, because one is not afraid of God's judgment. How few there are who find this peace? If it be so, it is because there are few who will use the confessional; there peace is to be found, and I do not know of any other place where such peace is to be found in this world.

(3) The third thing to which we have been brought back by our religion is *hope*—pure, strong, undying hope. How can any Christian ever be miserable or cast down when he has before him that superb promise of eternal life? True, there is sin, and sin blots out hope. But we have just seen that there is an unfailing remedy for sin, and when that is used, hope returns. God cannot deceive us. There is but a little while longer for any of us to live, and then comes the great judgment and the reward which fixes our destiny everlastingly. There is no possible reason it should be any but one, and that a destiny of eternal blessedness, and of such joy as we cannot even now conceive in imagination. There is no *chance* about the matter; heaven must be ours unless we ourselves wilfully throw away our hope. It is to this

that we have been brought from those far away countries in which we wandered as exiles from God, by the means of our holy religion.

IV. One has been asked to call upon an eminent lawyer who has somewhat to communicate to one's advantage. And when one answers, it is to be told that a will has just been made by a very great man, who has known us well, though we have no claim upon him, a man of fabulous wealth, and in that will he has given us a noble inheritance in a vast estate. He makes it public now in order that we may realize it is all definitely settled. His own people, friends as well as relations, are all pleased with the terms of the will, and are there to welcome one very heartily as fellow-heir with themselves. The marvellous things about this inheritance are that there can be no rivalries or disagreements among the heirs, for each one has been given everything heart could desire, nor loses aught because others inherit with him, and then the Testator Himself does not have to die in order that the inheritance may pass. He did that long ago, but now He ever lives to enjoy with His heirs their glorious heritage. For this is our own condition now in our blessed religion; we are surely going on to the bliss of heaven, unless we shall ourselves forfeit all of our Lord's goodness by wilful failure to do those things which He commands; and His commandments are not grievous.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.”—(St. Luke xxi. 33.)

OUR blessed religion is unique among the great religions of the world in more than one way, yet in nothing more conspicuously so than in this: that it centres wholly about a human figure which is *divine*. The other great religions of the world have their founders and great prophets who are revered with almost divine honour; but there is nothing like that amazing fact of the Catholic religion, the incarnation; it is at once the joy of the believer, and the despair of the infidel. It is not claimed for Mahomet that he was more than the greatest of God's prophets; nor for Gautama, the Buddha, that he did more than rise to the height of absorption in the divine being; nor for Confucius or Zoroaster that they were other than most holy and inspired servants of God. But this Master of ours, for all His human instincts and sympathetic ways, is the Lord God Himself; not a human person with divine attributes, as bestowed upon Him, or earned by the sublimity of

His life, but a divine Person taking to Himself our human nature, in order that in it He might die, and so offer Himself an atoning sacrifice for all the sins of all the world. This, I say, is an unique characteristic of our religion, differentiating it at once from all others, and compelling us to refuse all fellowship with others as such ; for it being true, all others must perforce be shams or superstitions. It is not my purpose now to enter into an argument to prove the fact of our Lord's divinity, which the Church so strenuously holds. You all believe it, and are not likely to doubt it. But we are rather concerned to-day to think of another unique characteristic of our divine religion, and that is the sacred Scripture, our holy Bible. Other great world religions have their sacred books, but they are not like ours ; in type and aim they are quite different, in majesty of utterance they are in nowise to be put in comparison with the Bible of the Catholic Church.

I. If in our Scriptures we had no more than the words spoken by our Lord during His stay upon earth, how precious the record would be ! Worthy to be printed in letters of gold, the believer would ever cherish them as the most sacred of treasures. We might at first think that no other writings ought to be put alongside these divine utterances, that they should be kept in a volume all their own, as the Holy of Holies among our sacred books. And yet one cannot forget that equally precious in our thought are the narratives of the Master's life while He was upon the earth, the Nativity, the Baptism, the Temptation, the Miracles, the Passion, the Death, the Resurrec-

tion, and the Ascension—what records could be more sacred than these? Naturally there seems to attach a peculiar sanctity to the holy Gospels which record for us the account of our Lord's deeds and words alike, while He dwelt among men. The book of the Gospels is especially honoured in the Holy Mass. Yet we may not separate the Gospels from the rest of the divine Scriptures.

II. Why not? It is evident first of all, that our Lord Himself took over the ancient Jewish Bible, that which we call the Old Testament, and without eliminating or altering one word in it all. This is a wonderful thing, for one can scarcely conceive of the sacred books of any system, so different practically from Christianity as Judaism, being received by the Master so unreservedly and being made so much of as the Old Testament was by our Lord and His Apostles, unless—and of course this is the sufficient explanation—unless that Old Testament was divinely inspired of God, and therefore belonged to a larger realm of truth than any temporary religious system, however divinely sanctioned, could. Those ancient Scriptures became the Master's credentials. Out of them, He Himself and His followers framed the weapons which completely overcame every argument of Pharisee and scribe against the Gospel. Nothing is more significant than the unreserved way in which our Lord and His followers accepted the Old Testament as in the fullest sense the Word of God, the Scripture which could not be broken. And not only so, but they manifestly allowed all that the Jews themselves believed concerning the sacred

books; the Pentateuch was indeed the compilation of Moses; the Psalms, many of them at least, were the songs of David himself; while the great characters and incidents of the historical books were to the Master and His Apostles the very living men, and the actual incidents, which they had been believed to be. There is never a hint in the New Testament that any part of the Old is to be regarded as figurative and allegorical where it is superficially literal.

III. The place which the Lord thus gives the Old Testament in His religion is one which draws our attention to it in a very marked way. We are at once impressed with the *unity* of the whole, despite the great number of books and the many authors engaged upon them. We may not forget that the period covered in the production of these various books is almost 1,000 years, that is, from the time of Moses to that of the last of the prophets. One could not grasp the vital character of this unity until the coming of the Gospel made it plain. Yet now it is unmistakable. How can one explain such a fact as this? The Church answers us with the doctrine of the Inspiration of Holy Writ. It was of the divine plan from the beginning that the Scriptures should be written, in order that man might know through celestial revelation the things it was important that he should know, and which he could not find out for himself. Therefore the Holy Ghost came upon holy men of old time, at different periods in the history of God's chosen people, and moved them to write this or that book as we now know it, of historical record, of devout prayers and praises, of prophecies; whatsoever

you will, but all according to the original plan and purpose of the great Inspirer of all, and He Himself over-ruling whatsoever they wrote that there might be no mistake or error therein. For one can see that it would ill accord with any conception we have of the divine power and goodness, to fancy that God could permit prophet or psalmist or historian of old time to put into the sacred records which He had planned to give to His people, any error or mis-statement. Better to have no revelation at all from heaven than one which could mislead, inducing us to accept for true, as on the authority of the Holy Ghost, that which is in reality false. The moment one accepts the notion of all Scripture being fore-ordained and given to man by inspiration of God, he perceives that there can be no possibility of any mistake allowed in the records.

(1) Realizing all this the Church has not hesitated to call the holy Scripture the Word of God. It is made up in the outward form of the words of men; but these words have been selected and so overruled by the Holy Ghost that only the exact truth may be conveyed by them; thus would God guard His people from all error and deception in the things He has been pleased to reveal to them.

(2) Nor has the Church, that is the society of the faithful founded by our Lord's Apostles, according to His teaching and by His authority, hesitated to add to the Old Testament Scriptures those writings of the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the various Epistles and the Revelation of St. John, declaring that these also are a part of the infallible

and undeceivable Word of God, to be received by the believer as inspired in the same sense and in the same fulness as the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Herein we find a very remarkable testimony to the sense of her own plenary authority which the Church Catholic had from the beginning, forasmuch as she did not hesitate to separate these particular books from all others written by devout and Apostolic men in the first century of our era, and to say that they, and only they, were to rank with the ancient Bible to which the Master had set His seal, as the divine Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

(3) So soon as the society of the faithful had reached that point in its development that it was known and recognized of all men as the Church which our Lord Christ, through His Apostles had founded, there ceased to be need that further Scriptures attesting her divine origin should be written. The canon of the Bible was complete and closed forever. Before the end of the first century the Church might have been likened to a plant yet so small in the spring-time that those who looked upon it could not know of what sort it was, and therefore, constantly in need of attestation on the part of those who had planted it, to assure men of its genus and species. But so soon as she had begun her real work in the world at large, through the bringing in of the Gentiles, then the plant was seen to have developed into such goodly proportions and well marked type that it could be plainly recognized by every one as that which had been planted from on high. The Church needed the attestation of the Scriptures to her divine

origin no longer, after she was able to give proof of her heavenly calling by her deeds.

IV. Howbeit, people are often disturbed in these days, and made to doubt the infallibility of holy Scripture, through the persistently repeated allegation that there are many mistakes in the Bible. It is not to be denied that there are difficulties in the sacred text which we cannot reconcile. It is urged that the inspired record has been proved false as to the creation of the world by scientific discoveries, false as to history by secular records, and that over and over again one part of Scripture is contradicted by another. Let us be patient when these things are urged and look at the matter calmly. Is it true that actual scientific demonstration, not theory, has proved anything false that is stated in the Scriptures? It is not true. Men are pleased to *infer* certain things from the sacred narrative, and then to show that science proves those inferences false; but we want to look carefully to see whether that which is inferred is indeed found in the inspired text, or only assumed by a superficial study of it from the actual words used by the Holy Ghost. In like manner with regard to historical inaccuracies; it cannot be shown that there are any mistakes in the biblical history. There have been brought forward a good many assumptions as to ancient history, but there is not sufficient evidence in any instance to warrant dogmatism. It is always plain enough to the unprejudiced that a little further light upon the subject might easily demonstrate the Scripture story to be in every particular accurate. So far as apparent contradic-

tions in the sacred narrative itself are concerned, it is not hard to see that when for centuries upon centuries the inspired records were only preserved by copyists, and that we are by an immense distance removed both in the Old Testament and the New from the original manuscripts, of whatever sort they may have been, it is not wonderful that there are discrepancies; but it is amazing how many of them can be solved with great probability by means of reasonable assumptions as to the manner in which the errors have crept into the text. It may be urged that, when we are so far removed from the original writings it must be impossible to have any certainty at all as to the true text, the answer is that despite all discrepancies, the great mass of the text in the various manuscripts remains unimpaired, giving us an amazing degree of certainty as to the original records. It is easy indeed to magnify the difficulties of the text of Holy Scripture, yet, as a matter of fact, the well-founded criticism of experts hardly impairs its integrity in any serious degree whatever. It is the wonderful coherence of every part of holy Writ with every other part, in spite of the differences between the different books, that, when it is illuminated by the interpretation of the Church universal, makes one perceive with the greatest enthusiasm that it is in very truth the Word of God, differing fundamentally from all other books, because inspired for the great purpose of giving His revelation to mankind.

V. One cannot glorify holy Scripture as the infallible and undeceivable Word of God too highly,

and yet it is not to be forgotten that we depend for our faith and for the forms and practices, the moral obligations also, of our religion, not upon holy Scripture, but upon the teachings of the Church. What I mean is that it is by no means the teaching of the Catholic religion that each believer has the Bible put into his hands, and is bidden to go and read it, and then to carry out in his life what it tells him, and he will be a good Christian. The Church says, Nay; the divine religion is indeed recorded in holy Writ, and we cannot teach anything different from that, for the same revelation has been given orally to the Church as is given by pen in the sacred writings. But the divine system of human duty is not so systematically and precisely declared in the Scripture that any man can, by his unaided wisdom, thence deduce in all its fulness the right mode of living acceptably to God. We can see that this is true by observing for a moment the multitude of sects which profess to found their systems upon the Bible, yet differing in the most radical way, often, from one another as to the matter of human obligation towards God. The Church tells her children plainly and distinctly in creed and prayer-book and articles of religion, what is their duty, and she expects them to follow it upon her authority—which indeed is the Master's authority—no matter what they may think that they find in Scripture foreign to her teaching. Nevertheless she gives them freely the sacred volume. Let us see for what purpose.

(1) First, as a book of devotion, full of heart-moving prayers, and subjects for meditation. In the

words of Psalms and Canticles she has ever found her noblest hymns of praise. Nor will one want for petitions and supplications of any sort who will avail himself of the inspired words. The Psalms have from the earliest days formed the basis of the daily devotional office of the Church universal, and the whole of Scripture has supplied earnest servants of God with inexhaustible themes for devout contemplation.

(2) Secondly, our Bible serves us very wonderfully as a sure stay of the heart in days of adversity and darkness. Nothing consoles us as the language of the divine Scriptures, nothing gives the despondent such fresh courage, the afflicted such patience, the sorely tried such hope; that last above all things, it seems to me, that blessed *hope*. So the Epistle for the day reads, "That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"; and again, "Now the Lord of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." There is nothing that gives such pure, strong, undying hope as the Bible.

(3) Then thirdly, in the Scripture we find the demonstration of the truth of our religion. I suppose that every one sometimes is harrassed by doubts. Just as when one is troubled with questions about our own Communion and her Catholicity, the tonic he needs is found in reading such a life story as that of Pusey, so when we are distressed by doubts concerning our religion, and God's love, and our own future, the tonic which restores the equilibrium of the soul

is His holy Word. There is nothing like that to bring home to one the never-failing providence of the heavenly Father, and how absolutely His children may depend upon it. His gracious purposes have ever worked out in mercy in days gone by; the sure promise is that they shall do so for the time to come.

VI. Man walks on through the world enveloped in mystery. He finds himself here through no will of his own; he waits his time to be called away with no power of choice in the matter save such sinful choice as those exercise who take their own lives. He cannot tell *why* he was made, nor what is expected of him, nor what shall be his fate after he has passed off the earthly stage into the veiled land. There are voices enough to be heard, speaking about the mystery. Voices of the world which say, All is blind fate; we seem to be free but we are not; unseen powers force us on and work their will upon us. And one cries, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"; and another cries, "Let us seek to live uprightly according to our light, and not fear that which may befall us when we go hence." Nature has its voices, concerning the mystery, and one often says, All about you is death, but death is only one step in the great path of onward life. My subjects die in the autumn, but look at the lovely revival of the springtime, and fear nothing. Another voice says, Nay! but the resurrection of the springtime is only a delusion for the individual. He lives his allotted span, and then at last there comes an autumn which is followed by no springtime. The pathos of human life has its voices too. One cries, All about us is misery and disap-

pointment and pain, yet by these agencies are fine and noble characters fashioned, and the loveliness of the human soul brought to light. But another voice replies, Nay! despite all the loveliness of character that is developed in a few, the many go down deeper and deeper in sordid misery, despair and sin. The destiny that holds the world in thrall is not good. Little satisfaction truly can one get from such voices as he goes on in the way of the years and life grows sombre about him. It is all a great terrifying mystery, this experience which we call existence. Is there no key that can unlock its problems and solve its riddles? Aye! it is God's most holy Word; therein is the secret of life made plain; therein is the future all laid down; therein is the believer so taught to live in the fear and love of God that he may go through all the days of his pilgrimage here with stout heart, knowing that of his hope for the time to come he shall not be disappointed.

A HIGHWAY FOR OUR GOD

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”—(Is. xl. 3-5.)

THE holy Baptist by his ardent preaching and ascetic zeal made an immense impression upon the men of his day, and this was the more remarkable, for he never put himself forward nor did he work any miracles; he but called men to repentance because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. So enthusiastic were the people about him that they would have accepted him as the Messiah had he permitted it. The priests and Levites of the Jews did not know quite what line to take with regard to him; therefore they came to ask him, “Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No! Then said

they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." It is not hard to see how literally he fulfilled his words, making in that spiritual desert of Judea and Galilee a highway for the Master by the thousands of hearts of men which he stirred to repentance, and to looking to our Lord for redemption. It might indeed have seemed that the highway which he prepared was but raised upon a quicksand, for the multitude which followed the Master in consequence of St. John's preaching was a very fickle one, ready to stone Him one day, and to take Him by force to make Him a king the next. Yet it is not to be forgotten that the seed of truth was sown in many hearts to germinate after a time, and not immediately. It is very noteworthy that the Gospel tells us of our Lord after being rejected in Jerusalem, going away beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized, and that many believed on Him there, saying, "John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of This Man were true." Thus in the desert of hard Jewish hearts the holy Baptist did succeed in preparing a highway for the Master, and making straight paths for Him at His coming.

I. Every Christian priest and every Christian believer in his way must be taking up constantly this cry, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." The cry is addressed to the Church herself, the company of the

faithful; the clergy taking it up as the divinely appointed preachers of the Word, the laity as exhorting one another, and so much the more as they see the day approaching, that is at these special seasons of the Christian year. The Lord comes now continually in the conversion of individual souls of men; every time one who has before been indifferent is brought under the gentle yoke of Christ, is a time of coming on the part of the Master, for so does the number of His elect grow, and advance towards its full completion against the day when He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead.

II. First, it is the business of the Church to prepare a highway for Him in the desert. This is a very significant statement, for the world resents the idea that it is a desert and not fit to receive the Saviour when He comes to it. The tendency of all human systems of religion, in these days at least, is to make the best of whatever there is found among men. It is popular to say that there is a great deal of good in the world after all. That is false, however, except so far as the Gospel has won its way into the hearts of men. The world is essentially evil. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father," says the Apostle. Men lose sight of this fact that the whole world lies in sin, and that God is displeased with it. There is no inherent goodness in it that can be brought out into the light and cherished and developed until it becomes a valuable auxiliary of the work of the Church. No, the world is a desert, and its barrenness and worthlessness are

brought out into sharp relief by the "highway" which is to be constructed right through it by the servants of God. It is one of the conspicuous notes of the true religion that it sets itself in opposition to the natural things, it will not in any way ally itself with them. Men would say, at least the world need not remain a desert, let us all turn to with a genuine spirit of social fraternity and make it bud and flourish; it can be done, and the Lord then will have no need to pass through it on an exclusive highway, as if there were no good thing in it to be so much as noticed. But the Church says, all of that is a delusion, the world is hopelessly arid and sterile; it will never again be good for anything until it has been burned over by the fire of judgment and so purified.

III. Secondly, the servants of God have not only to build this highway through the desert, but they have also to make it straight and level, for the Lord's unhindered progress into the hearts of men. For there are many obstacles to the spread of the kingdom interposed by the world, and every one of them has to be met by the Church and vanquished.

(1) Every valley is to be exalted. That is, the lowlands of indifference and sordid worldliness are to be filled up and raised to the Gospel level. Divine truth is the great enlightener and quickener of the world. The vast masses of mankind are indeed sunk in sin and shame, but it is largely because they have been left so long in the pit, in the swampy places of every sort of misery and degradation, that they have lost hope. They but strive to get through the days of this world's life without grievous want of food

or shelter, and that is all. Nothing could be more pitiful than the hopeless misery and stolid indifference of the teeming millions of earth's poor. If Christ is to come into their lives, they must first be inspired to look up and to realize that better things are possible, that their condition need be so wretched as it is only for the few years of this world's span, and then every good and pleasant thing may be theirs in eternity, if they but ally themselves with the gracious Redeemer who passes through their midst along this high road.

(2) Not only are the valleys to be exalted, but the mountains and hills are to be made low. These mountains and hills are the prejudices and self-satisfied ignorance of men, their wilful ways and false systems, which they choose to think are better than the Gospel, or in any case equally good with it. They will not suffer their creeds and philosophies and ideals to be beaten down. Yet this is just what the Church has to do if she is to prepare the straight path for our Lord. Every human system upon which men pride themselves is hostile to the Gospel. It must be broken down if Christ our Lord is to possess their hearts. The wise one must surrender the fine-spun conceit of his theories and hypotheses, and bow to the authority of the Gospel. And so it becomes the business of the Church in every way possible to overcome the false systems and notions which oppose divine truth, that the Master's paths into the hearts of men may be levelled.

(3) Again, the crooked places are to be made straight. How many of these there are, and what a

herculean task it seems to be to try to overcome in men's minds the opposition they have to the divine religion because of the inscrutable things in nature and in life's experience. How can God be good, they say, when He allows such things to go on unchecked, the strong oppressing the weak, the tyrant enslaving the feeble, the cruel torturing the defenseless. Not only does He not interfere to punish the cruelties of men practised upon their helpless fellows, upon little children, and those of weak mind, but in nature the same thing obtains. Nature is merciless, fate seems to control the world's story, and so far from prayer bringing about any different state of affairs, the praying people are more afflicted than those who ignore and despise God. It is no easy matter to straighten out such crooked conditions, yet men are hindered constantly from believing and accepting the Gospel just by these things. Therefore the servants of God who would make straight His path have to be striving, with tireless patience, to show their troubled neighbours that there is wisdom in all manner of circumstances which at first sight appear merciless and capricious; that if one will but consider that we are created for the larger life of the world to come, and not for this present one, the apparently arbitrary dealings of the divine government can be recognized as in reality kindly ordinances for the soul's eternal welfare. Yet there is nothing harder than this, to persuade the world's unfortunates to acknowledge the divine goodness.

(4) Once more, God's servants are called to make the world's rough places plain. How many

places there are, and how cruelly rough they often are also. We have to contend against this just as much in the Church as without, for alas, Christians so seldom seem to illustrate the Christ spirit in their lives, in their daily intercourse with one another. As the Apostle says, they bite and devour one another; so much so that it is proverbial that ecclesiastical quarrels are the most bitter of all. It is no easy task to soften hard hearts, to comfort sore hearts, to persuade men that there is something better in the Master's religion than they see exemplified commonly in the lives of believers. Yet there is no sort of labour more fruitful in results than this. The constant effort to speak kindly, to act lovingly, to be gracious and sympathetic; slow to take offence, quick to make up, such things as these move men more strongly than any words of argument to embrace the divine religion. Thus by making the rough places plain do we wonderfully make straight the highway for our God in the desert of this world.

IV. If we be in earnest at all we cannot but be eager for a revival of the Christ life among us, of the spirit of the Gospel in our congregations, of its power in our own personal being. So the Church on this Fourth Sunday in Advent causes us to pray, "O Lord, raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us." Those who pray so have awakened to a sense of the urgent need of their souls. We have come to realize that things are very bad with us indeed. We have grown to be so sluggish in our Christian profession. We no longer care much for our prayers, for our self-examinations;

we are most indifferent about the use of the sacraments, we are filled with personal pride, with love of the things of the world, very likely also bound down with sensual desires and appetites. So we are very urgent that our Lord should come among us and revive us. The means whereby we are to be delivered are His bountiful grace and mercy—how good that sounds; it is the very thing that we have need of, our lives have become such a desert. Well then, let us hearken to the voice of the Lord's prophets in all ages, and seek to prepare a way for Him to come among us. For He is ever coming when we are making the way for Him; He quickly occupies whatever space we shall prepare for Him in our hearts.

(1) The first thing, if we would have Him come to revive us, is that we prepare in the desert a highway for Him. It is never an easy thing to do, for it means drawing sharp lines of distinction. Human nature shrinks from this. How can one go against such and such people when they are so good and kind as they are, only they do not see Christ's religion as we see it. How hard it is to resist one's love of pleasure and amusement, in order to be loyal to the Church, especially when one sees prominent Church people who quite ridicule the practices we think to be enjoined upon us, and even those among the clergy who feel quite free to do what seems to us clean contrary to the Church's teachings. Yet building our highway cannot mean anything else in the desert than making sharp distinctions, ranging one's self inflexibly on the side of Church and Gospel, even though we be reckoned fanatics or Pharisees for do-

ing so. It is a great thing to put one's self distinctly upon Christ's side in the eyes of men, when that side is unpopular; our modern ways of serving Him tend so to blur all the sharpness of old fashioned Christian outlines. We must acknowledge that to be a true follower of the Master means standing out in all sorts of ways not only against common religious practice, but against the ways we have suffered ourselves to become used to in perhaps a good many years. If one should now start in to build a highway, a conspicuous broad path of duty, along which our Lord may enter into our lives, it must involve no little hardship. We have gotten into such easy-going ways of Christian living, that one hardly distinguishes the believer in any important point of practical piety from the non-professor of religion. What have we to do then, if we would change this state of affairs?

(2) We have to make a straight path for the Lord's coming into our hearts. There are the valleys to be filled up. How deep they are, these valleys of negligence, of sloth, of indifference, of easy self-indulgent worldliness, wherein the soul sinks down in ignoble ease and forgetfulness of its high calling. Is it not true that we have permitted ourselves in many ways to grow lax, to forget the zealous earnestness that ought to mark the servants of Christ? Then there are the hills to be brought low; our actual sins, the evil habits we have allowed ourselves to drift into. For every wilful sin tolerated in the soul of the believer is like a great mountain obstructing the development of the Christ life in us. We sometimes persuade ourselves that we have no actual sins, or

at least no more than sins of thought. Yet if we would examine ourselves by the rule of God's commandments, it is certain that we would find many things of which we had not taken account: sins of pride, of covetousness, of lust, of anger, of self-indulgence, of envy, of sloth. God's grace cannot move onward when wilful continuance in any of these as a mountain blocks its way. Then there are the crooked places to be made straight, our insincerities, our inconsistencies, which so often cause scandal to our neighbour. How full of deceits and unrealities most of our lives are! We seem to be unable to be quite genuine, frank, straightforward. We have our purposes to gain, and directness does not appear likely to serve our end as well as indirectness, so we act in a manner that is not straightforward. It seems impossible for us to be quite simple and direct in our ways; our lives grow more and more artificial and unreal unless we make persistent effort to be quite genuine. This is what we must do if we would prepare the way for our Lord in our hearts. Nor must we forget to make the rough places plain. We are all of us apt to be ungentle, unamiable. One often hears it said that one does not like amiable people, one does not want to be amiable one's self. It is probable that when we speak so we are using the word *amiable* in a modified sense, and as signifying something which is not attractive in character. But the proper meaning of the word is *lovable*, and surely one ought to want to be like that. It is so easy to let our selfishness, or our nervousness, or our own trials, make us irritable and fault-finding, to let our pride make us

stiff and haughty in manner and speech, but these things are great hindrances to the possession of our hearts by our Lord. Gentleness, courtesy, unselfishness, charitableness of speech and thought, are qualities of the soul which He greatly loves, and which we must cherish if we would have Him take possession of our lives.

V. The prophet adds that as the result of thus making straight in the desert a highway for our God, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Does that ever come true in this world? I suppose not in any such fashion as that *all* flesh shall see it. That is not to be until the last day when the Lord comes in visible glory and awful majesty to judge the whole earth. The prophet tells us in another place of the glory of the Lord which is to be revealed. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." That is, I suppose, that along His path on either side of the highway, the lovely flowers shall grow. It is like the course of some bright and babbling stream through the woods in the springtime. Its banks revel and luxuriate in wealth of richest greens and radiant blossoms. It is not true that very much of this delightful growth seems to mark the onward course of the Church through the world, first, I suppose—and this to our shame—because believers are so little loyal to the Master, and do not permit Him wholly to possess their hearts as He would, and to display in them the goodly flora of His coming; secondly, because the unregenerate man has not yet the eyes to

perceive the sweet blossoms that are there. It is not hard for you and for me to recognize the wonderful results which have followed in the world from the preaching of our Lord's religion, though we admit freely that those results fall very far short of what they ought to be

(1) In our case if we be honestly devout, we cannot but distinguish the lovely and encouraging things that have come into our experience through the onward progress of our Lord within our souls. Life has been very hard, we think, and yet we must acknowledge that it has also been filled with goodness, the desert has been made for us to blossom as the rose. Is it not so, and shall we not thank God to-day for that?

(2) There is something yet more to be desired than that: it is that the onward progress of our Master in our lives has been marked in the eyes of spiritually-minded friends by a true blossoming and bearing of fruit. They have seen that our characters are growing little by little, very slowly it may be, into Christlikeness, and that is very lovely in their sight. More inspiring is the thought, if we only dared to think it, that in the sight of those holy ones on high, saints and angels, who do not make mistakes in their judgment, the wilderness and the solitary place, by which our hearts are meant, are gladdening to look upon, and that which was a desert is now rejoicing and blossoming as the rose.

(d) Nevertheless, that we ourselves never come to see the transformation wrought in us by the Master's coming into our souls, while we are in this life,

matters very little. The spring may be backward, and we not clever at finding the wild flowers—that is not important. St. John Baptist did not in this world look upon the fruit of his labours. It is enough to have done our loyal part in preparing the way of the Lord, by making straight in the desert a highway for our God, by exalting the valleys, bringing low the mountains and hills, making straight the crooked places, and the rough places plain, that His coming may not be hindered.

THE FREEDOM OF THE GOSPEL

“Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”—
(Ps. xxxii. 1-2.)

THERE was great discussion among the theologians of the later middle ages as to how far the soul was freed from sin and its consequences by repentance. Dr. Neale points out that St. Cyril of Jerusalem sees in the sudden commencement of this 32nd Psalm, with *blessedness*, the congratulation of the sinless angels to those, who after having once fallen are now again made worthy to join their society, when the voice of the Father is heard, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.” There are three different words used by the Psalmist, each one of which should be given its specific force: “Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is *forgiven*, whose sin is *covered*, and to whom the Lord *imputeth no sin*.” For it is evident that we ought not to think of sin as being so covered that it remains, though hidden from sight as if under a cloak; one does not like to think of

God forgiving in that imperfect way. And when it is said that the Lord does not *impute* or reckon sin, we should not think of it as still left in the soul, but passed over by the divine indulgence. God is a God of purity, He hates sin, and He cannot forgive it without blotting it out in the case of true penitents. We believe concerning Baptism that it washes away all guilt of original sin, and we believe also that it restores primeval innocency; nevertheless, that the *fomes peccati*, the lusts of the flesh, and of the eyes, and the pride of life, still remain in their tempting power in the baptized. Yet much more than this we believe, that through Baptism divine grace is given to the children of God whereby they may fight a winning battle with all those lusts, and not only so but by that very fighting be made little by little into the fashion of the humanity of Christ their Lord, that in the end their perfection of blessedness shall be more wonderful and glorious than was Adam's innocency, with supernatural righteousness added to it, in paradise. In the same way it is of the truth of our blessed religion, that the sacrament of Penance not only restores baptismal glory and innocency, but adds great wealth of grace whereby the propensities of sin, developed in our souls by actual transgression, and which Penance does not remove, may be altogether conquered, and the happy soul through the effort required for their conquest be built up ever more and more into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It ought to be remembered in passing, however, that the fulness of restoration for penitents after deep sin, is wrought only by the

agency of the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.

I. The great Apostle in the midst of his discussion of the value of circumcision, asks, with reference to the blessedness of which David speaks in the 32nd Psalm, "Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also, for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness?" The circumcised, that is, the Jewish people, were the favoured race. God Himself had given them the covenant of circumcision, and the promises, and many great and signal favours. It was axiomatic with the Jew to regard himself as especially blessed by God because he was of the circumcised seed. But the Apostle says that the promise was given to Abraham before he was circumcised, as the reward of his *faith*. The covenant of circumcision was not the ground of the promise, but Abraham's faith was. From that starting point all who were found true to the faith of Abraham were to be reckoned his children, whether circumcised or uncircumcised. Such is the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, for St. Paul speaks by inspiration.

II. If this be so, however, how are we to explain the fact of circumcision, an ordinance instituted for His people by God Himself, and required under serious penalty? There must be reality in it, or our Lord would not have submitted Himself to it, as the Church expressly teaches us that He did as at this time. It is evident enough that it was the divine plan in Old Testament days to preserve a peculiar and separated nation, from all the nations of the

earth, as God's own people, and the covenant of circumcision was the covenant by which the Israelitish tribes were thus separated. They were God's people, all the rest of the world's inhabitants were Gentiles, that is, merely *nations*; but the Jews were the favoured nation, God's own folk.

(1) The first purpose of the separation of this one nation, by means of the covenant of circumcision, was the perpetuation and safe-guarding of the divine revelation. It pleased God to reveal His will to mankind through the prophets and holy writers of ancient days, who were inspired by the Holy Ghost for this purpose. Through Moses the revelation was begun, and continued on through nearly a thousand years, by the utterances and writings of many wise men and prophets. This revelation was all of a piece, though there were so many writings included in it. It is what we call the Old Testament Bible. It was too precious to be left at large. The manuscripts had to be copied, to be preserved from loss, and authority was needed for this purpose. Furthermore it was never the will of God that the Scriptures which He gave to man should merely be safely kept and handed on to successive generations, but that they should be read to His people constantly, and expounded, and applied to the needs of their lives. You perceive that there was good reason on this account why there should be a peculiar people set apart by a special covenant.

(2) Again, it was ever the divine purpose that in the fulness of time the Redeemer of the world should come, the Son of God taking flesh in order

that He might die for the sins of the whole world. Because there could be nothing so great and mysterious as this fact, it was needful in the divine wisdom that it should be led up to and prepared for by a very wonderful system of prophecies and types as well as circumstances. For this it was most necessary that a nation should be set apart whose history should unfold all of the divinely planned preparation for the advent of the Redeemer. The covenant of circumcision was the one which stamped Israel as the people whom the Lord had chosen, in order to make a way in their national life along which the Messiah might come for His great work.

III. But then, it may be asked, was the old Law in itself an unreality? It was a vehicle indeed for the bringing in of the new and perfect Law, in the fulness of time; but was it, as an agency for man's salvation a dead letter? It is certain that the ordinances of Judaism could not take away sin; the blood of bulls and of goats could not purge a human soul of the smallest taint of transgression. There was no ordinance of sacramental grace, for the Holy Ghost was not yet so given to men. Circumcision is in a sense a type of Baptism, but it is only a shell of the reality without any substance. And yet because it was all that God had yet given to man it was sufficient for his salvation. Men attained salvation in those old days through obedience and faith, or perhaps more strictly through the obedience which declared their faith. It is easy for God to save without sacraments, and He certainly did save all the patriarchs and devout men of old time by the means of

their loyalty to His commandments. The ordinance in itself had no efficiency, but the obedience had, and the ordinance pointed always to Christ, through whose merits obedience was made a saving exercise. It is very noteworthy, however, in this connection, that the rewards and punishments which gave sanction to the old Law were almost exclusively of this world. The patriarchs believed in immortality, in future bliss for the righteous, in future woe for sinners. Yet their grasp of the hereafter was very vague, and their religion focussed attention hardly at all on that. If they were loyal to God they should be rewarded with all manner of earthly prosperity, corn and wine and oil in abundance, the increase of their flocks and herds, peace, long life, immunity from disease, safety from all enemies; these were some of the blessings which fidelity to God should bring to them. On the other hand, if they transgressed, all manner of earthly evils should overwhelm them, famine, poverty, disease, the malice of their enemies, captivity, slavery, torture, in short every sort of thing which man feels to be unendurable. And that is practically the essence of the old Jewish system. Eternal blessedness is assured for the righteous, and eternal woe for sinners; but what was promised, and that for which the men of Old Testament days worked, was health and wealth and earthly bliss; what was threatened as the foe of sinners was affliction of every grievous sort. The joy of the patriarchs was to live to a good old age, having many children and grandchildren to bear their names and inherit their wealth. They aspired no higher than that.

IV. One might then have thought that our Master Christ, voluntarily entering into the ancient covenant of circumcision, would have likewise taken this portion of earthly comfort and prosperity for Himself and His followers. The marvel of His story at this stage of His life is that He assumes the obligations of all the ancient system, grandly and perfectly carries them all out, then casts away the rewards which the old Law promises to obedience, and deliberately chooses all the penalties which it pronounces upon the disobedient. According to the terms of the covenant, every earthly blessing should have been showered upon Him. He should have been richer than Solomon, more favoured of God than David; yet He is poor, despised, rejected of men, cast out, persecuted, slain; and last of all on the cross He surrenders, as it were, the one imperishable consolation of the righteous in all ages, the sense of the presence of God, for He cries, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" What does all this mean? First, I think, the *choice* of the eternal joys instead of the temporal ones, by every surrender of those temporal ones as things which He would not accept in lieu of the spiritual rewards; and secondly, the *winning the right* to claim for that humanity which He bore the eternal delights as its prerogative, seeing that He had suffered the penalty due to all the old humanity without deserving it. But it must never be forgotten that if we would claim the things which He has won for us, by right of our union with Him, we may no longer demand the things which He so stedfastly rejected throughout His whole earthly

life. It seems impossible for us to bring this simple truth home to our minds. We insist that if we honestly serve God and seek His will, we ought to be shielded from temporal adversities, and prospered in our worldly affairs. Was He? And if His whole earthly experience was one of hardness, poverty and trial, terminating in the most cruel death of a malefactor upon the cross, on what pretext shall we ask immunity for ourselves from temporal ills? The great Hildebrand cried in his bitterness of soul, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile." He was thinking of the Psalmist's words, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore the Lord Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Better had he thought of that which the Master might have said had He been as we, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore, I die upon the cross." Shall the disciple be above his Master, or the servant above his Lord? "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord." Shall we ever learn to accept this saying, and to heartily acquiesce in the fact that the attaining to the eternal things must mean the willing surrender of the temporal things? Yet we always think it hard that we cannot have the pleasant things of this world without forfeiting our right to heaven.

V. It has been the good pleasure of the Master to free us from the covenant of circumcision. We are no longer under the bondage of the Law. No more is it said to us, "Touch not, taste not, handle

not"; we are not under the yoke, we are free, Christ's free men. But why? In order that we may distinctly choose the eternal things, and make it our life effort to win them, putting the temporal things into the background. So God's service is called in one of the Collects, *perfect freedom*. How many of us ever regard it as that? It is rather hard bondage, because we are not animated with any deep sense of gratitude to Him for His goodness, because we have no keen appreciation of the blessedness of heaven and the life of the saints to which we are called. That freedom from the things of sense appears to us like mockery in another point of view. We do not want to be thus freed; we cleave in heart to the flesh-pots of Egypt, and our soul loathes the light bread of God. Yet not only are we freed from the bondage of this world's aspirations, desires and appetites, but we are given a great new and splendid aim for the satisfying of every craving, for the filling us full of enduring joys. We are given the heavenly promises, the sure hope of everlasting felicity. We are lifted up a stage higher in the ascent of life, brought up upon the same plane with our Master Who so heartily put aside all temporal joys that He might give Himself up wholly to those that are eternal. Alas, it is too often true of us that having been thus exalted and made free in Christ, we turn back again to our earthly longings and appetites, praying and seeking only for this world's consolations, and vaguely hoping that we shall not on that account lose heaven.

VI. It is all very well, one perhaps thinks, to

speak of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, which means a turning of the back upon temporal aspirations, and being ardently desirous of the spiritual ones; but is not the liberty unreal after all? Does not the Jew by becoming a Christian only exchange one form of servitude for another?

(1) Are we not perpetually hearing it to-day that this we must do, that we must not do? The Christian Church insists upon the commandments as strongly as the Israelitish Church did, though she has changed the meaning of the fourth, and greatly modified the second. It is still *Thou shalt*, and *Thou shalt not*. Where then is the liberty? In this, that there is ordinarily no punishment in this world for the infraction of the divine commandments, ordinarily no visible reward for faithful obedience to them. Why is this? I suppose because God would have us remember always that He is, and we ought to be, supremely concerned about the things which make for eternal life, and not for the transient conditions of this world.

(2) But some one will add: Are we not threatened with hell if we disobey, and allured with promises of heaven if we be faithful? True enough, yet it would seem to be that the rewards and punishments that can only ordinarily be experienced in the world to come beyond the grave are too vague in character to affect the conduct of men to any great extent, at least where they are not very much in earnest. How many people does one know who seem to be influenced in their moral and religious conduct by the hope of heaven and the fear of hell? There

are doubtless a great many who are so influenced, but they are the *earnest* ones, who have, quite independently of these more selfish considerations, already set out to live definitely virtuous lives. To such folk the promise of heaven and the threat of hell but become *stimuli*, goads, urging them on to greater efforts after devout living than they have hitherto made. They are also a *proving* of the earnestness of the faithful, for those who are moved by these considerations to more hearty serving of God show that the root of the matter is in them, and that it goes down far deeper into their nature than any mere effort to win a prize or to avoid a disaster. It is of these that the Psalmist says in the text, "in whose spirit there is no guile," that is, there is no self-deceit. They do not serve God because they feel that they must win heaven, nor yet because they are afraid of hell; but, having come to realize how great and how lovely He is, they cannot but follow after Him, drawn by the cords of a man, the bands of love, as the prophet puts it, and they cannot but dread to offend Him; their most grievous hell would be to lose Him, their most blissful heaven is to be joined inseparably to Him.

(3) Undoubtedly there are those in the world who refrain from sin because they fear the judgment of God, lest they be lost; but surely that is a good thing, for if it helps not their own souls, of which God requires more than that sort of service, it at least has useful result in deterring the world from a great deal of misery which otherwise would flood it. There is no doubt that the fear of hell keeps

thousands within bounds and makes life more tolerable for their neighbours; therefore God is wise and kind to let it be before men's minds, even though it move not individuals to true love and obedience.

VII. In our earthly wisdom we are wont to talk solemnly about the puzzle of life and its inscrutable mystery, but if we really feel so concerning the temporal conditions which encompass us, it is because we have not begun to grasp the reality of the divine revelation. There are mysteries enough in religion, but the present state of the human race in the world is not one of them. What men call the puzzle of life is but God's proclamation of the fact that the eternal things and not the temporal are the real things; but the message to us, one and all, is that His service is perfect freedom, in which every man may carve out for himself the glorious destiny of everlasting life.

THE SERVANTS KNEW

"But the servants which drew the water knew."—(St. John ii. 9.)

OF THIS exquisite story of our Lord's first miracle Archbishop Trench says: "He who each year prepares the wine in the grape, causing it to absorb, and swell with, the moisture of earth and heaven, to transmute this into nobler juices of its own, did now concentrate all those slower processes into a single moment, and accomplish in an instant what usually He takes many months to accomplish. This analogy does not help us to understand what the Lord at this time did, but yet brings before us that in it He was working in the line of (above, indeed, but not *across*, or counter to) His more ordinary operations, the unnoticed miracles of every-day nature." In this the Archbishop, as he himself declares, but reproduces the thought of St. Augustine and others of the early fathers. We have no difficulty in acknowledging that both nature and our own human life are full of wonders, far beyond our explanation, and in that sense truly miraculous, yet so

much a part of our constant experience that we do not rate them as miraculous. It pleased our Lord in the beginning of His ministry to supernaturalize the operation of the wine making, and to go on from time to time during the days of His earthly life introducing into nature's courses other miraculous operations, in order to call men's attention to the message of grace which He had to deliver, and to make them see that His own divine mission was attested by the Lord of nature. There were no credentials He could have given so acceptable to the men of that time as the miracles which He wrought among them.

I. When in these days the claims of the divine religion upon their loyalty are brought before men, they are wont to demand some convincing attestation of those claims. Nor that they would regard the sort of miracles which our Lord and His Apostles wrought in the olden time as satisfactory, but something as convincing now as the miracles of the Gospel were then. "If we are to accept the Church's doctrines," they say to the preacher, "you must prove to our satisfaction that they are divine." There is beneath this position the quiet assumption that man is under no obligation to hold any belief whatever about spiritual things, nor to render any service to Deity. If Deity wants human loyalty, He must first prove that He is entitled to it. Man begins by assuming that he is independent of God until God demonstrates to him that he is not. It is to be noted at once that He does not admit any such independence on our part. He puts the matter just in the

opposite way. He insists that we first obey His laws in order that we may find for ourselves in the very obedience the supreme righteousness of those laws. If we are loyal, we shall be convinced. So He says in St. John's Gospel also, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

II. Then the answer of man comes naturally, Why should I obey the precepts of religion, until that religion has attested its authority to me?

(1) In the first place, we should set ourselves to obey the precepts of the divine religion because of the menacing uncertainty of the future. We cannot escape from the tragic mystery of death. It matters not whether our friends are hurried away out of the most perfect health and happiness, when, as we say, they had everything to live for, or whether they die by inches, after weary months of hopeless disease. In every case death when it comes is necessarily mysterious and awful, for we cannot believe that it is the end. We are sure that our beloved ones continue to exist in the land of spirits, although we cannot form any satisfactory conception of the character of their life there. The Catholic religion is the only system, whether of religion or philosophy, which in any satisfactory way illuminates the darkness of our ignorance concerning the other world. Therefore it is the part of wise men, who would be ready for that other world when their own time of passing out into it shall come, to hearken to the precepts of the Church, even as wise men in this world's matters

take heed to insure their persons and their properties against accident and fire.

(2) Again there is the enormous traditional weight of the teachings of the Catholic religion to move men to accept and obey it. For it has proved its power to meet the needs of human kind in the dark days of this present world, and in the solemn moments of the passing of souls. It has satisfied the poor and wretched ones, whose whole existence here was a ceaseless cross-bearing. Millions of such afflicted ones have by reason of their faith been made strong to endure smilingly, with un murmuring content, whatsoever blows of fickle fortune were rained upon their heads. It has satisfied the martyr as he was offered his choice of rejecting his Saviour or of going to the stake, and he has lifted up his eyes to heaven in glad thankfulness that he has been counted worthy to die for the Master who first died for him. It has satisfied bereaved folk, women whose husbands were taken from them in the very noontime of well-mated married life, mothers whose little children were one by one plucked out of their bosoms by the seemingly pitiless angel of death—these have been content to go on through long years of sorrowing, quite heartily accepting the divine will because of what they have found in their religion. Other world-faiths give stoical endurance to their votaries, a great contempt of life; but none, as our holy religion, inspires the departing one with the enthusiasm of those who perceive their Lord waiting for them in glory, that He may lead them forth after Him into the land of life.

(3) Nor is there any other religion the world has known that is so supremely and unanswerably consistent with itself. Believers are often enough inconsistent, but the faith itself is not inconsistent. Taken as a whole the Gospel system is so stupendous, so wonderful in its declaration of the divine love, that one may say, It is impossible that such a thing can be true. Yet every part hangs together with all the rest. You cannot take the moral code of Christianity out of the Gospel, saying that that is sufficient and that all dogmas may be disregarded, for then at once your system breaks down hopelessly. Where is the sanction for the moral principles of the Gospel? It cannot be found, save in our Lord's divinity. It remains true by the severest logic, that if our Master be not divine He is not good. You cannot withdraw one statement from the Church's creed without destroying the balance of all the rest. Taken together the Catholic principles are irresistible, forcing home upon the thoughtful mind their divine certainty. Yet severed one from another, not one of them could be believed without violence to the conceiving power of the mind. All other religions have parts that one can praise, and parts that one must reject; and there is the sense that by judicious re-arrangement and pruning they could be improved; but the Catholic religion is not so; all its parts hold together, and the elimination of one is the hopeless discrediting of all the rest. There is good reason therefore why men should accept the Gospel system as being that which the circumstances of their life, in view of the mysterious future which is so near at hand for every one, demand.

III. To revert to the miracle of this day's Gospel, we are told that the servants knew whence the wine was, for they had obeyed the Blessed Virgin's injunction, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Therefore when the Master said, "Fill the water pots with water," they filled them up to the brim, thus illustrating the alacrity and thoroughness of their obedience. So it came to pass that the servants which drew the water knew. For them the water was changed into wine immediately—that was what constituted the miracle. For us the day of that sort of miracles is over. There is no longer occasion for them except at very rare intervals and under very peculiar circumstances. None the less does the process of the turning of the water of natural things into the wine of spiritual things go on in the realm of God's Kingdom, the Church, in systematic and supernatural fashion. If we persevere in obedience we shall not fail to know the wonder which takes place; the servants which obediently draw the water know. But we must not forget that for us now there is also the lesson of patience to be learned. The spiritual things cannot come to the natural mind rapidly, the natural mind must be spiritualized to discern them, and that spiritualizing process is a very slow one. Nevertheless it is a real and recognizable one. St. James points a lesson from the experience of the farmer: "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient." The patient waiting for the fruit to come, for the revelation of the miracle, is the lesson

of faith, and that is the lesson we have most of all need to learn. Howbeit it has its encouragements. As God, who made the patriarchs to wait so long for the Redeemer, left not Himself without witness for the waiters, so we, while we patiently look for the transforming of the water of the earthly things into the wine of the heavenly, find many encouragements by the way as well as discouragements.

(1) The servants who obey learn first of all to note the swelling of the buds on the vine which has, since the frost passed, been drinking up the water in the ground. The enthusiasm which one can feel in the work of God is in its way a true preparation for the miracle which is to be worked. We are apt to lose our enthusiasm as we go on in Christian experience, but we ought to try not to do so. It is a great thing to feel the joyous impulse of serving God, as when the sap begins to run through the vine in the springtime.

(2) There then follows in nature's miracle of the transmutation of the water into wine, the flowering of the vine. It is a blessed thing that we are permitted to realize, as we go along in our service of God, the beauty of that service. It is so good to be obeying God. We may not feel that very often, nevertheless there does come a goodly measure of the efflorescence of obedience into our lives as we pursue the high ideals.

(3) The flowers of the vine presently give place to the little green grapes. They are not attractive, they are harsh and unpleasant to the taste; they do not seem a worthy fruitage of the goodly plant on

which they grow. How true it is also that in the obedience of the faithful to the divine commands there are found temporary results which disappoint and grieve, perhaps quite discourage the believer. One had looked for better things than sour grapes. We are not troubled at these things in the natural realm because experience has taught mankind that the green fruit is not less the good fruit, though only the good fruit in its undeveloped condition. Yet like children in the spiritual realm we are fain to insist that we shall not in our vine growing have to pass through the stage of the unripe grapes, but shall find at once ready to our hand, after the flower, the full-ripe fruit, with all its delicious flavor, its rich undeveloped wine. It happens indeed very often in the earnest Christian life that God seems to reward one's service only with sour grapes. The best of our efforts recoil upon our heads as failures; things are much worse for all our efforts than if we had not tried at all. Poor foolish soul! Canst thou not recognize the fact that the period of the unripe fruit is but a stage in the onward progress of the vine in the perfection of its bearing?

(4) At last the grapes begin to colour, to turn to purple where the sun kisses them. There is the promise of what is presently to be, and how gladly the vine-dresser beholds day by day the advance the clusters are making in their reddening. The believer who has obeyed and gone on patiently begins to see in the circumstances of his life the hand of God, and what an exquisite revelation that is! He can hardly believe it to be true at first. Things have turned out

to be so different from what one had looked for, and yet they are so altogether as one now would wish them to be. One had not thought of such a solution of the difficulties as has presented itself, nevertheless there could not be a better or more satisfactory solution of them. With what enthusiasm the glad soul now turns to the heavenly Father to thank Him for having brought about such unlooked-for results. There is nothing more delightful, nothing more reassuring, in the whole field of Christian experience in this world, than the conviction forced in upon the consciousness, that God has been ordering and fashioning everything, even while we were fancying that He had turned His face away from us and from our matters, so that what our hearts have really longed for most of all, though we did not acknowledge it to ourselves, has been indeed brought to pass.

(5) After the half-coloured fruit follow the full-ripe grapes. It is certain that loyal Christians do find immense consolations in this world, though not in the way the people of this world would think satisfactory, nor after the sort which the believer himself had pictured them as coming. The bliss of prayer, the rapture of worship, the ecstasy of the sense of being under the divine protection, and so fearing nothing, these are ripened clusters indeed from God's vine. They are not apt to come to young people, not likely to be recognized by those who have not gone through a good deal of hard experience; the full-ripe grape belongs to autumn time, not to the spring nor even to midsummer days. Do not let us be impatient to pluck our clusters. Rather let us

linger over them, delighting in their loveliness, and doing this and that little thing to enhance that loveliness. Above all let us be deeply thankful to God for it, for nothing makes the fruit of God's vine more attractive than a heart grateful to Him for it.

(6) We may enjoy the ripe grapes of the divine planting and nourishing while we are in this world, but let us yet not forget that the miracle is incomplete until the richness of the grape has been transmuted into wine. There is the plucking of the fruit from the vines, the treading of it out in the presses, the long, slow process of fermentation before the good wine is ready. Doubtless God could do it all in a moment, with a word as at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee so long ago. But that is not His way with the wine of life. It is often true that people endure a large part of their purgatory in this life; they are pulled down from the secure and glad places in which they had hoped to end their days; they are bruised and trodden under foot, as it were, by a thoughtless and selfish world; they are left apparently bereaved in order that the secret forces of grace may transform their natures as the fermentation transmutes the juice of the grape into wine. If this process, a long and severe one, be not endured here, it surely must be hereafter, for only through much tribulation can we enter into the kingdom of God. Nevertheless at last the happy day comes, when all the purgatorial work being completed, the servants are bidden to draw out the good wine and to bear it unto the governor of the feast. Happy souls enter then into the joy of their Lord.

IV. All brave hearts know that if life in this world is to amount to anything it must adventure something. There are no prizes for such as will not dare. The Argonauts would never have won the golden fleece had they lacked courage to attempt unknown seas. In this world's strivings we have only human promises to assure us, only human examples to guide us, human experience wherewith to solve our puzzles. And all human experience demonstrates the fact that the majority of those who strive cannot win; the prizes are but for a favoured few. Nevertheless the children of men never grow weary of seeking their fortune, and of taking all manner of chances to win it. The bold quest of the Gospel's prize is hedged about with no such uncertainties, no such discouraging realities. The reward of the seeker here rests upon the word of the Almighty, the examples are those who failed not in any single instance to win that for which they strove so gallantly. The failures in the quest of eternal life are only of such as refuse to persevere in their following. No one ever yet honestly and perseveringly sought heaven in the way in which God's Church bids men seek it, and failed to win heaven. There are prizes for *every* gallant adventurer in this pursuit. The servants which draw the water know. They who have gone on into the land of life, who have borne out their wine pitchers to the governor of the feast, these know whence the wine is, though in the beginning of their obedience it was no more than water with which they filled the pots. We who are still engaged in obeying are finding out little by little the

mystery of the miracle. It requires faith, and patience, and tireless perseverance in obedience, but when these are present the servants know.

THE SOWER AND THE SEED

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”—(Phil. ii. 12, 13.)

IT NEEDS especially to be insisted upon in these days that those who would be saved must work out their own salvation. There is the feeling abroad that religion requires a great deal of us, and not very reasonably. Men say in their hearts if not with their lips, that if God wants them, let Him save them; they will not oppose, but neither will they lift a hand to further their salvation. And yet this is not a reasonable position for any one to take in view of the facts. If it were reported on fairly good authority that in some new country, as for example in every part of Alaska, and not just in some favoured regions, there were enormous deposits of gold, and in a territory so vast that millions of miners might work there without interfering with one another; would it be necessary, do you think, for the government to pass laws offering people extraordinary inducements to go there to settle? You know that men

are only too credulous of such reports, ready to go and risk all that they have on the most vague promises of success in the field of their venture. But were the stories presently proven to be not exaggerated; were it made evident that there was abundant opportunity for millions yet to make their fortune in that land of gold, would not poor men who stayed behind to delve in barren farms, hardly able with the utmost toil to keep body and soul together, men toiling in wretched sweatshops in the great city, or struggling together and jostling against one another for some petty job which will not pay them a living wage—would not such as these be reckoned fools by their neighbours, if from mere sloth they refused to make their way to that land of wealth and help themselves? And would they not account themselves fools when they should see their more enterprising fellows return presently from their mining, rich and prosperous? Or if some great danger were impending, some plague or famine, and proclamations of it were posted up here and there in every available place in the great city, warning men what precautions must be taken; while public speakers were week by week from an hundred platforms proclaiming aloud the facts, and men could see thousands of their fellows carefully making all preparations required for the emergency, yet in spite of these things should refuse to read the proclamation, decline to listen to the speakers, ridicule their neighbours for their fears and their credulity—who would pity such as these when the day of destruction came and found them unprepared for it? We are, all of us, or cer-

tainly most of us, too ready to assume that the consequences of loyalty or disloyalty to God in the profession of religion, are not likely to be very serious one way or another. If one does not feel like becoming a member of the Church, we assume that he will probably not suffer for it hereafter if he lead an upright moral life.

I. Our Lord expressly warns us in the parable of the Sower and the Seed that this is a fatal position to take. He will bring it home to us that God has a right to require service of us, that we were created for this, and that He will not take anything in the stead of this. For very strikingly He brings out in this parable the fact that He Himself, the great Sower, expects us to bear fruit, as the result of His sowing His seed in our hearts, in spite of every sort of natural disability. Is it not remarkable that He should represent Himself as casting seed upon the hard wayside footpath, upon the stony places where there was but a thin layer of soil, and in the midst of the thorn roots? For He could not be ignorant of the nature of the ground on which He cast the seed. It is still more wonderful if we bear in mind the fact that He Himself Who sows the seed has caused the disabilities to exist. In other words, whatsoever we find in the circumstances of our lives is the result of His purpose and will. He causes the difficulties to exist, He sows the seed in spite of them, and then He expects us to bear fruit. We are reminded, in thinking of this, of another parable, that of the pounds. The man who had received the one pound excuses himself for not having added any in-

terest to it, on the ground that he knew his master to be an austere man, taking up that he laid not down, and reaping that he did not sow. Our Lord is content to accept the characterization, and He turns it upon those who fail to develop anything heavenly in their lives by making the nobleman in the parable say, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: whereupon, then, gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?" It is a startling question, yet it is not an unreasonable one the moment we recollect that we are God's creatures, called into being by His will absolutely, with no rights of our own against Him, and put into this world to do that which He would have us do. It is His good pleasure to cast the seed of His truth upon the wayside path, where it will be trodden down, and where the birds will devour it. It is His good pleasure to cast the seed of His truth upon the stony places, where there is not soil enough to enable it to generate healthily, and to allow the sun to beat down upon it with remorseless rigour. It is His good pleasure to cast the seed of His truth into the midst of the thorn roots, though He knows perfectly well how destructive those thorn roots are; and in spite of all this to expect the wayside land, the stony places, and the thorn centres to bear fruit. Does it not seem unreasonable?

II. "Some fell by the wayside," says our Lord, "and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air

devoured it." The wayside is the footpath by the hedge, at the side of the field. It is a short cut and men have used it, encroaching that much upon the good soil. It is easy for us to dilate upon the grievous disadvantages under which thousands of people lie because of the selfishness or thoughtlessness or actual sin of others. They live down-trodden lives; they never have had half a chance to be good. Perhaps their parents were evil and brought them up in vicious ways; or they had bad teachers; or wicked people got them in their power and abused that power for mischief. We are quite sure that a very large part of the sin in the world is to be pitied rather than blamed.

(1) There is this to be said about all such cases: that God is not ignorant of them, and that He is especially the protector of the weak and the helpless, His little ones; so that we need not greatly concern ourselves as to their judgment at His hands. But when we come to speak of ourselves we may not forget that we know and understand the day of duty. We may plead that we have been grievously set back in our Christian life by the fault of others. Nothing is more common than to allege the blighting effect of evil example. We have been made cold and hard and skeptical because we have seen great inconsistency and hypocrisy in those who stood high in the Church. That has had its effect upon our own piety and earnestness; how could it be otherwise? Perhaps it is worse than that; we have been cruelly wronged and taken advantage of under the cloak of religion. It is natural that we should turn against it. How many

people one finds who make this sort of excuse for their own coldness and indifference in regard to the things of God. And they say with virtuous indignation, Can you wonder that my heart has grown hard, and that I have largely ceased to believe in Church, and in sacraments, and indeed in anything more than a virtuous, upright life?

(2) Nevertheless the very fact that we are so indignant at the hypocrisy and inconsistency of those who have hurt our souls is evidence that we know our religion to be in itself good. We are not really so foolish as to confound the system with its unworthy exponents; we are perfectly well aware that the Church does not set before us such models. Our Lord in His wisdom has allowed us to have these experiences; He has permitted the wayside path to grow hard and unreceptive through the passing over it of many feet; and yet He scatters the good seed upon it just as freely as where He knows the soil to be most highly productive. Why? Because He would have us prove our sincerity by rising superior to the conditions. The wise farmer who would make the most of his land gets out his plough and quietly turns up the clods, obliterating the footpath, and making the soil along the hedge row receptive again. We do it in all sorts of ways in our world life. If bad business associates have gotten us into trouble, we break with them and start over again; we do not give up all business because there are so many rogues in it, and take to tramping and begging. Very likely it makes it harder to serve God heartily, that one has had such trying experiences in his Christian career,

but it does not in any wise make it impossible. God allows the hardness to test our worth.

III. The Master goes on in the parable to say that "some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture." We all know people who seem to have no depth of religious feeling, who impulsively serve God with the greatest devotion for a little while, and then fall away.

(1) But in our own case we do not like to think of such a course as fickleness. We acknowledge that we have no depth of religious nature, but our excuse is that we are naturally unbelieving and unemotional, perhaps unimaginative. It is not our fault; we were born so. Other people have no difficulty in believing the doctrine of the Real Presence, but to us it is quite unintelligible. Other people can go into ecstasies of devotion over the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, but it does not appeal to us at all. Other people can lose themselves in meditation, but our imagination seems to find no field in spiritual things. Therefore whatever religion we have is superficial; we discover this when trouble comes, when we have need of the divine help; then it is that we perceive that the root of the matter was never in us at all. This is no more than to say that there are in our hearts the stony places, where there is not much earth; yet the parable tells us that the great Sower casts His seed upon these places also; He must know that they are there and He is not One that would waste the good seed.

(2) We learn all sorts of things to which we do

not take naturally, when it is for our advantage. The good gardener, charged with the duty of making his Master's grounds all fair and fertile, studies carefully the rocky places, brings fresh soil and puts it over the whole surface where there is not depth enough; he fertilizes it, and arranges for its due irrigation, and after that he may hope the stony places will be as productive as any other part of the garden. It is perfectly possible to cultivate the gift of faith. God is waiting to bestow it upon us just so soon as we give proof of our readiness to receive it. And we must remember that a spiritual imagination is not required of us for salvation, nor yet the grace of deep emotion. Obedience to the divine revelation in practising all that God enjoins is the best sort of faith. If the vivid consciousness of things spiritual come home to us, we may well thank God for it, and recognize its bestowal upon us as a signal evidence of the divine goodness; but we need never suppose that the possession of it is in any way essential to our salvation.

IV. The parable then tells of the seed which fell among thorns, and that the thorns sprung up with it and choked it. Our Lord declares very plainly what He means by the thorns: "the cares, and riches and pleasures of this life," which choke the word so that it becomes unfruitful. Which of us does not plead the thorns in his life as the reason why he cannot be all that he should? Yet the Sower knowingly casts the seed where the thorn roots are.

(1) There seems to us a good deal to be said about the *cares* of this life as a hindrance to Christ-

ian fruitfulness. We do not bring into existence the most of our own cares, they are thrust upon us by the circumstances under which it has pleased God to have us live. As one gets older the cares almost always increase; "man is born unto trouble," the wise man says. We cannot escape these cares, we must attend to our duties in the world, in the family; often it is a sharp struggle to get along, to have enough to eat, and the wherewith to keep warm. How many there are who plead the cares of this world as the excuse for their failure to bear fruit unto God; the thorns choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. Yet it need not be so. While Martha was cumbered with much serving, Mary, the Master says, had chosen the good part which should not be taken away from her; intimating that Martha might have done likewise. We, in these days, are much more fain to glorify Martha than Mary, for we have a very exalted idea of the necessity of looking well after this world's ease and comfort. It remains true that by patient effort the thorns can be cut down. We can refuse to let the cares of this world distract our hearts from our duty to God. We are expressly bidden to cast all our care upon Him, and it is amazing how free from anxiety and distraction very busy people may be who persistently endeavour to live in loyalty to God.

(2) We find other thorns in the *riches* of this world. It need not mean that we must be millionaires in order to come under the peril of this enemy of the good seed. Wherever there is money enough to be comfortable, where one does not have to be looking about for one's next meal, and for a few dollars

to pay the rent—wherever there is money enough to keep one from anxiety about the future there is danger of the thorns choking the good seed. One says, But we have to live here in the world, and living costs money, and God has been pleased to give us what we have. He knows the danger from the thorns of earthly possessions, nevertheless He casts the good seed among them just the same, and expects us to see that it germinates and bears fruit. These thorns also can be cut down. One can stedfastly set one's self to deny soul and body certain innocent things which one's income makes it possible to enjoy, in order that one may have something as the fruit of self-denial for the Church and for the poor. One can make one's self feel the pinch of poverty in this and that small way, so that the thorns of riches do not have power to choke the seed. Then one comes to realize little by little that God has made it hard for us to bear good fruit in the circumstances of our lives, just in order to test our earnestness, to see whether we shall succumb to the thorns, or set ourselves at work vigorously to cut them down.

(3) Thirdly, the *pleasures* of this world are called thorns because they so often have power to choke the Word in our hearts and make it unfruitful. It is urged that the Church is constantly seeking to curtail human pleasure, and that there is already too little of it. It is urged that life in these days is so strenuous that people need all the innocent pleasure they can get to offset the severity of labour. Besides, we must not be overstrict about what is, and what is not, innocent in the way of pleasure. But our Lord

reminds us that our pleasures are too often thorns, destroying the good seed of eternal life. And we do not have to look very far afield, if we be altogether frank about it, to see that what He says is most true. The seeking of pleasure distracts the soul from spiritual things. Work is so hard all day that in the evening we must have our amusement. We come home from that too tired to pray, while the next morning we sleep so late that there is no time for prayer. On Sunday pleasure must be sought, for it is the only holiday one has, therefore God's service is neglected. In Lent and on Fridays we cannot give up our amusements because we get so little time for recreation, even with these forty days counted in. You see how easy it is for the pleasures of this world to choke the Word, even as the thorns choke the good seed. But God allowed the seed thus to fall among the thorns in order to prove us. The obstacles are not insurmountable; we can cut down the thorns if we will. In the first place by restricting our pleasures to those which are suitable for a Christian to engage in. It does not suffice for me to say that such a novel or such a play upon the stage does not do me any harm; the point is, whether it dishonours and insults God by wantonly setting at defiance His standards of moral uprightness. One might just as well say it did one no harm to listen to profanity; it rather disgusts one with such language; but shall a Christian willingly stay and listen to profanity, and show no displeasure at it? In the second place we shall not let the pleasures of this life choke the Word if we are careful to be moderate in our lawful amuse-

ments and recreations. The secret for the right use of such things is that they are but means to an end, a relaxation from one's work in order that one may resume it again with the more zeal and strength. The moment we make our pleasure-seeking *an end*, we have lowered the whole tone of our lives. We were made for nobler things than amusement. It is perfectly within the power of every servant of God to so deal with the thorns that they shall be unable to grow up with the good seed of the divine sowing in us and choke it.

V. The great Sower therefore wastes not His seed though He scatter it with so lavish a hand, neither is He indifferent to the character of the land upon which His sowing falls, but wills that the hard-trodden foot-path in this life, the rock place in that one, the thorn bed in another, shall receive the good seed, and by the very obstacles thus permitted by Him to exist in the way of its fructifying, give proof of a ready will and stedfast purpose—or the reverse of these—to serve Him, because it is of His good plan for the souls of men that each one shall “work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.”

SINFUL LUSTS OF THE FLESH

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit.”—(I. Thess. iv. 7, 8.)

THE student of nature cannot but marvel at the wonderful things wrought in the lives of beasts and birds through what we call instinct. Their Maker has endowed them with this faculty, in order that they may effectually accomplish the purpose He had in their creation. In the human species, too, we find much that is instinctive; yet we feel that just so soon as one has got beyond the years of early childhood the moral faculty comes in to modify what is done instinctively, as well as our rationally planned actions. The brute may indeed be trained to resist certain natural propensities, to overcome the leadings of instinct in some directions, and in a limited degree; yet we realize that such education is of a very different sort from that whereby the child is taught to master and to direct natural inclination according to rational and moral principles. These natural in-

clinations of ours—our instincts, if one like to call them so—are very remarkable things, and the more significant because so many of them unmistakably tend to evil. Men say sometimes that they cannot understand why it is that we should all have to go against nature if we would do right. Ought not our natural inclinations, if we be created by a good God, ever make for the right? The instincts of the lower creatures move them to that which is for their good, that they may fulfil the end of their being; but man is full of propensities to evil. No satisfactory explanation of that fact can be given save the one supplied by our religion—the story of the Fall.

I. In his unfallen state, in the garden of Eden, man was endowed with all sorts of natural desires, inclinations, and appetites, which could have in them nothing sinful. God had made the fruit of the trees of the garden pleasant to his palate, and had given him a natural hunger, prompting him to the right use of food necessary for the maintenance of his vigour. But there was no undue hunger ever felt by Adam, the result of such long abstinence from food as would tempt him to eat gluttonously; nor was there any such delight for him in the mere taste of his food as should tempt him to excess. God likewise caused him to feel that love for his wife, and such temperate marital desire, as should result in the bringing of children into the world; yet this could not be accompanied, until man had disobeyed the divine will, by any inordinate sexual passion, which should result in what was unlawful in wedded intercourse. There is hardly anything more significant in the

story of our first parents in paradise than the institution of the law of marriage in its full perfection and strictness, exactly as our Lord reaffirmed it more than four thousand years later for all time to come. The divine wisdom, foreseeing how great mischiefs should befall the human creature by reason of inordinate sexual desire, thus from the very beginning, while our first parents were yet unfallen, guarded our race, so far as it could be guarded consistently with our free will, from the perils of sensuality, by this strict and unmistakable law of marriage, the union of one man with one woman, separable only by death.

II. With the fall of our first parents came the overturning of the whole gracious plan of God for His creatures, and the wrecking of man's moral nature. In this wrecking we must recognize two distinct elements, else we shall not be able to understand aright the things which follow in the story of our race. There was first of all the driving out of the Holy Ghost. For God had given to Adam and Eve, not only all human perfection and innocence, but the fulness of the divine Spirit, the very gift which belongs to us through our baptism. This made them supernaturally righteous; they were saints, as one may say, upon earth; able to hold communion of the most direct and unrestrained sort with their heavenly Father; able, also, to behold and delight in the society of holy angels. This gift of celestial righteousness, the fulness of the indwelling Spirit, caused them to be clothed with supernatural glory, so that they were radiant and most lovely in the eyes of all

other creatures. The first consequence of their transgression was the going forth of the Holy Ghost from their lives, leaving them without celestial glory, in the state of nature; but not even of sinless and perfectly balanced nature, for the second element which we must perceive to belong to unfallen humanity was a body and a soul perfectly sound and exquisitely complete in all its parts, with every member and faculty in due subordination obeying the behests of the will. Alas for the lifting up of that will against the divine will! There followed not only its utter failure and confounding, but its dethronement. The natural desires and appetites, all so innocent and perfectly restrained hitherto, became as wild beasts, each one bent on gratifying itself unhindered, unlimitedly. Now there was hunger as a fierce craving for food, because one had had to wait for it a long time, or had not been able to secure enough to satisfy one's self. Or else the taste for delicate meats had been so indulged that it had become inordinate; thus man was guilty for the first time of gluttony. How soon drunkenness came into the world, we do not know. Holy Scripture suggests that Noah was the first to feel the effects of strong drink. Doubtless there came in sloth also, the love of ease which caused men to neglect their work, and to live base and ignoble lives. It is certain that very early there was a declension from the primeval dignity of marriage, for we read of Lamech, in the fifth generation from Cain, taking unto him *two* wives; and it is certain that sensual indulgence is one of the most ancient forms of sin. It is not obscurely intimated that this

was the cause of that widespread disobedience to God which caused Him to overwhelm the world with a flood in the days of Noah.

III. The fearful excesses of the old world in the matter of sensual sin are made known to us very clearly, both in sacred and secular history. As far back as the days of Abraham, probably two thousand years before our Lord, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown by fire from heaven because of their shameless and most impious licentiousness, and the name of Sodom has gone down in human speech as a synonym for unbridled indulgence in the lusts of the flesh. Secular history, likewise, is full of the story of the universal surrender of all the ancient nations to this grievous evil, which seemed forced on continually to new and more outrageous ways of gratifying itself.

(1) The wiser nations tried to make laws to stem the tide of evil, regulating marriage and concubinage, seeking at least to erect some barrier that might prove effective. For nature was taking the matter into her own hands, and working out her own tragic revenge, with the decadence of virility and constantly diminishing populations, and these afflicted with all manner of loathsome diseases and taints which were found worse than death. But the vice was too strong to be restrained so.

(2) Then there were also the divine laws of God's chosen people of Israel. It is most interesting to study that ancient system of revelation for the restraint of sensuality. We must never forget, however, that it did not wholly re-affirm the primeval

precept concerning matrimony, because that could not be kept by man in his fallen state until the Holy Ghost should be given back again. That conjugal command given in Eden pre-supposed the condition of grace, of celestial help, on the part of Adam and Eve. Therefore it is not wonderful that polygamy was tolerated, though it was not a general practice among the Jews. Divorce, too, was allowed, though under restrictions, which, if faithfully observed, would have made it very rare. Concubinage was common, however, and harlotry does not seem to have been strongly condemned. It all means that God was lenient to human weakness, to the hardness of men's hearts, as our Lord tells us, in the time when fallen nature was yet unredeemed, and mankind was still without the supernatural help of the Holy Ghost. We ought not to forget these facts when we consider the moral conditions of Jewish life before our Lord came. It is true, however, that God was constantly, by the prophets, warning men of the peril of self-indulgence, and inciting all earnest ones to seek after higher ideals than the average man was content with. It is to be noted, furthermore, that although divorce was allowed for more than one reason, God never tolerated adultery. He was ever stern in his condemnation and punishment of the man who defrauded his brother in any matter pertaining to the conjugal union.* The law of Moses was, "The adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death."

IV. With the preaching of the Gospel came two great facts which are the counterparts of those two facts of which I have spoken in the life of unfallen

man in paradise. In that blissful state, Adam was not only innocent of sin, but he was supernaturally endowed with the Holy Ghost. So through the salvation wrought by our Lord, innocency is given back to our race by the pardon of sin, and the Holy Ghost is once more bestowed upon the faithful. The little child, washed at the font, is not only cleansed from all guilt of original sin, but is also filled with the divine Spirit, so that if after its baptism it should die before being old enough to fall into actual sin, it would not only be clean enough to enter heaven, but also so divinely enriched by grace as to be able to appreciate and delight in the Beatific Vision and the society of the saints. Because then it became possible for man, through celestial grace, to keep the divine law in all its perfection, our Lord proceeded to re-enact the ancient precept of paradise, that of the indissolubility of the marriage bond. From that time Christian marriage, that of the baptized where there is no impediment, can be terminated only by death; divorce cannot be permitted for any cause—that is, such divorce as dissolves the marriage bond—divorce which is anything more in the eyes of men than a legal separation; polygamy is disallowed, concubinage is wholly forbidden, and fornication becomes a deadly sin. No one may now appeal to the relaxations of the old Jewish law, for they find their justification in the fact that mankind was yet unredeemed and was lacking the supernatural help of the Holy Ghost. For the same reason the marriage union of Christians is not to be put upon the same footing as that of baptized with unbaptized. Except both

parties to the marriage have been baptized it cannot be held that their union is of that sort which our Lord pronounces indissoluble, for it is not the marriage of those who have received the Holy Ghost. We Christians may not lose sight of the fact that Baptism is infinitely more than a venerable form or pious ceremony, initiating into the Church of God. It is the sacrament of life, whereby we are born again and incorporated into Christ. Our Lord said, "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." As a result it makes the marriage union a most sacred and very solemn bond, out of which consequences arise which we are all too ready to overlook, because the world's standards about us are low, and because we unconsciously think of things from our selfish point of view, as if the ordering of our lives here below were for our own gratification, and not for the effecting of the divine purpose in our creation.

(1) Wedded life was indeed given to man for his happiness—it is not good for man to be alone—but also that he might raise up children. The power to beget his kind is a most tremendous one held by man in trust for God. It may be the divine pleasure in some instances to interpose obstacles to this natural end of the marriage relation, but that is exceptional. Those who take this matter into their own hands, and refuse to have children, must incur the divine displeasure. Anything done to hinder the normal course of God's arrangement is a most grievous sin, calling down His wrath upon such as set at nought His laws. Especially impious is the taking

away of the life which He has imparted before it has come forth into the light—a crime which even the men of this world recognize as murder. I should not do my duty, did I not speak of such things; for we have grown in these days to very startling ways of setting at nought the plain teachings of the divine revelation. Men and women may not indulge themselves, and then seek to escape that for which God suffered them to have the indulgence.

(2) Not less true is it that since the coming in of the Gospel the standard of upright living is vastly raised. Men who do not themselves respect the Christian religion cannot escape from the fact that the highest moral authority now condemns practices which were tolerable in Old Testament days. But we are more especially concerned with believers, those who have received the Holy Ghost, and have thus been brought into covenant with God. The Apostle accents this fact very strongly in writing to the Corinthians. He says: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" Therefore for believers all sins of the flesh become especially outrageous. We cannot transgress with others without causing them to sin as well as ourselves; we cannot sin alone without the gravest insult to the Holy Ghost; we cannot transgress through unbecoming speech without angering God, who gave us our tongue for sober and good words, not for wantonness of utterance; we cannot permit our thoughts to go off upon forbidden things,

because our minds, the memory, the imagination, the will, all belong to God. We did not make any exception, reserving these to ourselves, when we dedicated ourselves to His service, and received His Holy Spirit in return. The eyes must be guarded, and the ears; there is no sense through which Satan does not find an easy entrance into the soul, if we be not ever on the watch to resist him.

V. So the Apostle's warning on this second Sunday in Lent ought not to be permitted to pass our ears unheeded. He speaks plainly: "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." And because there is no one of us who is not in some form or other assailed by the temptation to sensuality, it is the part of the wise to study how that assault is best to be warded off when it comes, and how one is to recover from its deadly mastery if one have unhappily been overcome by it.

(1) The first thing we have always to remember is that it is our duty to flee from temptation. It is true that we must meet it sometimes in the very path of duty. We cannot give up our life-work because it involves coming up against grievous temptation from time to time, yet it is very often true that we are engaged in pursuits, or interested in friendships which we have found out by sad experience to be full of temptations for us. There is no greater delusion than to fancy that after we have fallen we ought to go out to meet temptation in the same place again in order to vanquish it. That sort of heroism is not required of the servants of God, and it partakes of the nature of foolhardiness. The rule for us must

always be to run away from temptation, if duty does not require us to go where we have reason to suppose we shall meet it. In the case of duty we may confidently call upon God to help us, and be sure that He will supply sufficient grace to enable us to meet the Evil One successfully. But it is worse than foolish, it is a mocking of God to look for His help to resist temptations which we could just as well avoid meeting. Christian people are often most headstrong and disobedient in this matter. They cannot bear to give up some pleasant association, pursuit or companionship, which they know always subjects them to temptation, but persist in it, and fancy they are not displeasing God because they are praying to be kept from sin, and, as they say, are really making a determined effort not to sin. It is as if a man who was fighting with the habit of intemperance should deliberately pour him out a glass of strong drink, and then pray to God to keep him from tasting it.

(2) A second most needful thing for those who would conquer sins of the flesh is the living according to some rule which calls for systematic self-restraint, in innocent things, as well as in those which are hurtful. The unrestrained life is ever especially liable to succumb to temptation. It is true, no doubt, that the effort to practise self-denials provokes peculiar and often more violent temptation, for naturally Satan is eager to keep his prisoner from escaping; but it does not follow that because we are more vehemently assailed we are the more sure to fall. In this sort of self-restrained living we may find the noblest challenge of the brave soul on behalf of the Master's cause. The believer who voluntarily im-

poses rules upon himself which in this or that way—small way, if you please—subjects his inclinations and passions to restraint, involving obedience which costs something on the part of the will, that man has armed himself by the grace of God to make a good fight against the foe. There is no more vulnerable soldier of Christ than the one who protests that his life is hard enough already, and that therefore he has no need to impose upon himself uncalled-for hardships. Wise ones are they who live so systematically under rule that their natural desires and appetites are ever subject to the power of their will.

(3) Thirdly, and most of all, there is no remedy for sin-assailed souls like the confessional. Just because man feels the shame of sensual sins, they are the ones which more than any other keep people from the use of the sacrament of Penance. And that is a part of Satan's trickery, for he knows that nothing would help them so much as frank confession. Laying bare our shame produces a loathing and hatred of sin, and that is more powerful than any other influence within ourselves to restrain us from further transgressions of the same sort.

VI. "God hath not called us unto uncleanness," says the Apostle, "but unto holiness," and because holiness is much more than mere innocency, He has been pleased to sanctify us with the Holy Ghost. We Christians must never forget that. Impurity is shameful enough in any man, degrading him, as it does, to the level of the beasts; but in the case of a Christian it is sacrilege; "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God; who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit."

THE OVERCOMING OF THE WORLD

“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”—(I. St. John v. 4, 5.)

THE order of the seasons in our world life is very beautiful and full of interest for the student of nature. The fair spring-time comes, and the whole earth puts on its green robe of loveliness. We delight in it, and we are not wholly unconscious of the wonder of it. All these growing things have come of small and unpromising-looking seeds which were buried in the earth in the autumn just past. Our Lord used this striking parable when speaking to those Greeks who, being drawn to Him by His wonderful teachings, had sought an introduction to Him through St. Philip. He said to them, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” That was spoken by Him immediately of His own resurrection. They should see Him die, but they should not on that account be discouraged; for even

nature taught them that the death of the seed preceded its bearing of fruit. Every man sees in the parable a certain application to his own life, yet in only a vague way, until he grasps the truth of the resurrection. The corn of wheat lives on only in its progeny, as one may say, and so do men, as far as this world is concerned. A man raises up a large family of children; sons and daughters do truly reproduce the lives of their parents, and they are of their very substance, true fruit of their bearing. Nevertheless the individual dies, and so far as this world is concerned, does not revive again. And it is with the individual that we are most concerned. The wonder of Easter Day is that the Lord came back personally from the tomb. We cannot lose sight of this, however, that His coming back was not to the life of this world. He did remain upon the earth for forty days, yet not as an inhabitant of earth, but as a visitor from another realm of being than that which we know. That is what ought most of all to interest us in His resurrection. It is the proclamation of the continuance of the individual existence beyond the grave, and the existence of the soul certified to, and given actuality by the body glorified to meet the changed conditions of the soul's being, while remaining a true body of flesh and bones.

I. But is this what the Apostle means in the text, by the overcoming of the world? It is only a part of it, the outward formula which expresses the actual fact. The believer has risen to the consciousness that the world, that is the natural life to which our inclinations attach us, is the enemy of the soul. Our true

life can only be found in heaven. We were created for larger and better things than are to be found here. There may indeed be much that is good in the world; there is certainly a great deal that is lovely and attractive in its life; nevertheless, it is but a temporary and transitory condition of the soul's true being, valuable to fit it for the perfection of existence in another phase of being after this temporary life shall have come to an end. Therefore the world has to be overcome because it would assert itself as the end for which we were made, and would so absorb our interests and energies that we should never develop our true life; as if the worm should become so concentrated in its being upon the things of the ground that it should neglect the provision of nature for its change into the butterfly.

II. But how is the world to be overcome by the believer? The Apostle replies: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" It is in the following of our Lord Christ as our Master that we find the hope of overcoming the world principle. He went on through the world, setting it at defiance, refusing to live for its aims, refusing to be swayed by its standards, detaching Himself constantly from its life, until at last it seemed to claim Him by death. He was going the way of all the world. He had not succeeded in freeing Himself from its earthiness. But Easter morning told a different tale. It declared unmistakably that He had broken free from the shackles of the world being. Instead of perishing,

His body had come forth from the grave glorious and lovely—that was not much in itself—but now qualified for existence in the larger sphere of the spiritual realities for which His soul had all along been fitting itself. What a proclamation that Easter revelation of our Lord was of the destiny of mankind, in the boundless realms of the universe, in the very presence of God Himself, if one could but follow the Master on through death to resurrection!

III. So He rose again, proclaiming that great truth, and then ascended into heaven, to realize it in His human nature. It was not hard for Him to enter heaven, for now by His resurrection those celestial realms were naturally open to Him, as easily as any part of our globe is open to us in our present life. And from on high He looks down upon our earth which once He also inhabited, and feels the utmost interest in every individual life of man, as the gardener in the seeds which he has planted against the spring-time. The life of the soul is full of activity, as He sees it, working out its destiny for eternity, yet now hidden in the body, which changes not until the day of its transformation shall take place after the destiny of the soul is wholly determined. For the body must at last take such form for eternity as fits it for the indwelling of the soul, like those creatures of our earth whose dwelling places of shell are fashioned and fitted to their bodies first, and then hardened so as to be a defense and shelter for them.

(1) That hidden life of the soul, what a marvellous thing it is! Going on from the grace of holy Baptism, made strong and fully armed for its mili-

tant work for Christ in Confirmation, fed at the altar with the Lord's own Body and Blood, healed after its falls in Penance by the pardon of the precious Blood; developing in faith, hope and charity, in all the lovely fruits of the Spirit—that is what God purposed for it, and yet this may never be realized because the individual has refused to surrender himself to that gracious working of the Spirit. It is not manifested outwardly any more than the life of the seed growing in the early spring-time beneath the soil. God looks down through earth's surface, and perceives even the tiniest plant and blade of grass working away to find an exit into the sunlight above; so does He look into every soul of man to mark in it the development in grace and beauty, or the failure to so develop. And He will suffer it to go on so until the great day of spring-time shall come for the universe in a moment, and all souls shall be revealed to all creation as they truly are, for the body of each in that day shall wholly and perfectly declare the manner of the soul.

(2) Now the body of this earth hides the true soul. In one sense that is not true, for the body is even now more or less perfectly revealing the nature of the soul, in the manner of its being, in its deeds of devotion, in its works of unselfish beneficence, in its self-denials, or in the reverse of all this. The actions of the body may indeed be made the veil of hypocrites, and on the other hand they may but very inadequately set forth the burning love of the saints for God and for men; nevertheless, we do in our bod-

ies declare no small part of the hidden life of the soul to our fellow-men who observe us.

IV. This overcoming of the world by the followers of our Lord is a great work, it makes life wonderfully full of interest and of the deepest significance; for in the few short years of our pilgrimage here we are shaping our destiny in eternity. For when God's great spring-time comes, and the growing things of earth are revealed, the progress of the seasons of time comes to an end; there is no autumn to succeed that spring-time, though indeed a glorious summer of full ripe fruits which never fail nor decay, but go on ceaselessly in lovely luxuriousness of vitality; and, alas, a doleful winter of blackness and darkness that knows no solstice, but grows eternally more melancholy, for the souls that have failed in the day of their probation in this life. By what forces then is the world to be overcome? The Apostle says of our Lord: "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ," and he reiterates the saying, as if it were of the gravest importance, "Not by water only, but by water and blood." The reference is surely to that strange thing which St. John records as taking place at the crucifixion, so soon as our Lord had died. "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." We know that blood in connection with our Lord signifies pardon for sin, it is the price of sin, expiation; so the Scripture says: "Without shedding of blood is no remission." We know too that water is the symbol of purification, that wherein one washes that he may be clean. The Apostle in our text says,

“That is He That came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood.” Is it not as if he had said, It is not enough to fancy that in order to follow our Lord Christ one has but to keep himself clean, forsaking the old ways of sin and walking in newness of life. That would be signified by water, but he says the *blood* is also necessary. That is, there must also be remission of past sin, the expiation for the evil that has already been done. Many people will tell you that their idea of repentance is the cessation of evil courses, a reformation in one's life. There seems to be the feeling in the minds of such people that the old sins are all put away by the act of reformation. But then if that were all that is meant by our redemption there was no need for the Lord to die at all; if He had devoted Himself only to teaching men how to live pure and lovely lives, which indeed He did as no other teacher ever did before Him. Why then did He die? You may reply that it is through His meritorious death that the past sins of our lives are all blotted out. Does that mean that nothing is required of us in connection with them? Why then should any especially earnest effort after amendment be made; why should we not acquiesce in our bad habits as being natural to us, and practically ineradicable, and trust in the death of our Lord to cleanse us from their guilt? No, the Apostle says: “Not by water only, but by water and blood”; the mere reforming of one's ways and life is not sufficient, there must be repentance for the past, and repentance means more than simply confessing our sins and receiving absolution for them; it means also

the doing of penance for them all the rest of our days by lives of self-denial.

V. Mysterious are His words that "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." Surely the Apostle means that the great vital principle of the universe is the truth of all existing things, and that is the operation of the Holy Ghost. We see only the superficial things, and only a small proportion of them. We cannot grasp and appreciate the true things, the realities of the universe, except through the Holy Spirit. He is ever bearing witness, pressing home the truth upon men's lives. He did this in the olden time in the heathen world, making all earnest souls dissatisfied with their condition, more and more conscious of sin, and eager to find both *blood and water*; that is, expiation for their past, and a cleansing from present sin. He is working in the heathen world to-day, where the Gospel is not known, pressing home that sense of guilt and the desire for better things, and so bearing witness to the truth; that when the preachers of the Gospel come to those lands with the great tidings of salvation by the cross and by the sacramental life, they find hundreds, often thousands, to welcome the message with amazing enthusiasm, ready even as neophytes to die for the faith. And in Christian lands, so-called, the Spirit is ever bearing witness because that which He continually brings home to men through conscience and through the ways of the divine religion which they cannot escape from, is felt to be the truth, though they vehemently deny it, ridicule it, and do everything they can to overthrow it. Man is so con-

stituted that his inner nature responds instinctively to the truth in the sense at least of recognizing it to be the truth; and, though he hate it, he perceives that he is judged by it. What is it then to which the Holy Ghost bears witness? To the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, to the Gospel message of salvation. It is to this also that the water and the blood bear witness. So the Apostle says, "There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood, and these three agree in one."

(1) To the careless and irreligious they are witnessing that it is at the soul's peril one goes on in sin and disregard of the Christian life. For the Spirit presses home upon conscience the fact that there is another world, and a judgment, and personal responsibility to God; the water—that is, the agencies of holy Church for the uplifting of sinners and their conquering their sins, whose efficiency is demonstrated over and over again in every man's experience—shows clearly that it is possible by the grace of God to live noble and Christlike lives; the blood—that is, the expiatory work of our Lord, which is perpetuated and applied in the Church, especially in the great sacrifice of the altar—is a standing witness to all men that God loves them, and calls them to better and holier things, being willing to forgive all their unworthiness if they will but come in penitence to receive His pardon.

(2) The three witnesses may give their testimony in vain to the world at large, which indeed is not generally ignorant of its duty, but wilful in disregarding it, so that these become witnesses which condemn

them in the day of judgment; but it ought not to be true that they testify in vain to the professed servants of God. To the honest Christian the Spirit is ever testifying to the depth and reality of the spiritual things, to the nearness of God, the blessedness of heaven, the awfulness of hell, the presence all about one of angels and holy saints, as well as cunning devils. The Holy Ghost brings home to those who will listen to Him more and more every day of their lives the greatness and the importance of the hidden life, the marvels of prayer, and the immensity of the soul's destiny. The water bears witness in holy Baptism, in Penance, in all the agencies whereby sin is fought with and conquered, to the glory and perfection of the divine Gospel. It is not impossible for us to purify ourselves wholly, to conquer sin altogether, to become pure white saints, meet to stand before God in heaven itself. For this divine water has always with it the efficacy of the blood which flowed with it from our Lord's side upon the cross, divine healing virtue, divine cleansing, making the soul's garments white as no one on earth can whiten them. Nor is the witness of the blood to be lost sight of. The believer never can forget the cross and the precious death of our Lord and Master Christ thereon. The Church keeps it ever before him in the majestic sacrifice of the Eucharist. It is bearing its testimony to the immensity of the love of God for man, who would pay such a price to save him, of the exceeding impiety of sin which required the payment of such a price; thus compelling every thinking believer to keep a heart full of loving gratitude to his Maker,

and of deepest compunction for all his sins, causing him to strive all his days upon earth to manifest the life of penitence.

VI. Two small brown seeds fall into the ground in the autumn, one is of a coarse and stinging nettle, the other of a delicate and exquisitely perfumed rose. Early in the spring-time both begin to germinate as the outward part of each decays and sets free the living principle within. Presently two tender green sprouts appear above the soil; and so they go on, the one to produce its unlovely execrated fruit, the other its happiness-giving, heaven-suggesting flower. Who could have supposed to look at the seeds that they contained such diverse issues? In like manner do the lives of men go on side by side with one another in this world, not outwardly very different; but one is overcoming the world by the faith of our Lord Christ, the other is being overcome of the world because he will not heed the witness of the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. They both live out their allotted earthly span, they die, and after a little while are forgotten, all through the winter-time of the waiting world. Their bodies have decayed and turned to dust, setting free that which in God's creation of them is the eternal and imperishable part. Their souls in the waiting world are bearing fruit, the one in purgatory being fashioned into loveliness like unto the purity of the Lord Christ, the other in hell developing with horrible perfection of detail every evil tendency which in this world it would not resist and conquer. At last comes the great day of the everlasting spring-time, all in a moment, and

every soul finds itself now in its own body again, a body which no longer conceals, or imperfectly reveals, as here, the spirit which animates it, but wholly declares it in all its characteristics. How fair will the bodies of those who have overcome the world be in that day! How hideous the outward forms of all who here heeded not the witness of the Spirit, the water and the blood! And this is the record of that testimony, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

THE REPROVING OF THE WORLD BY THE HOLY GHOST

“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”—(St. John xvi. 8-11.)

OUR Lord reasons very tenderly with His disciples who cannot bear the thought of being separated from Him. He does not dwell much upon the fact of His death, for that was but one step in the great separation. They could not grasp the notion of the resurrection, so He does not speak much of that either, but lingers upon the thought of His going away from them to return to the Father. That notion of a *return* to His Father was a great and very illuminating one to them. He had come forth from the Father in order that He might enter into the life of the men of the world. Then He must leave the world and go back to the Father. That could not mean anything but that He was divine. And the disciples appeared to grasp it so far as it

was possible to grasp by any one before the Lord had risen from the dead. But it did not make them any the more willing to part with Him. The more highly they esteemed Him the less they could bear the thought of being bereaved. It was not the thought of bereavement by death that confronted them, but of the ascension. So the Master says: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I." They did rejoice on the actual day of the ascension, they returned from the mountain to Jerusalem with great joy. But at the time the words of our text were spoken, they could only think of His departure with the keenest sorrow. Therefore He is constrained to add that it is for their sakes He has to ascend. "It is *expedient* for you," He says, "that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." This Comforter we know to be none other than God the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. And our Lord speaks of His coming into the world as if it were to make the greatest possible difference in the condition of things, so far as man's relation to God is concerned.

I. This is a very difficult thing for the human mind to grasp. What difference can have been made practically in the great fundamental facts of sin and righteousness and judgment as the result of the Holy Ghost's coming? We can understand that men have greater light of truth now since the fulness of revelation has been given, and greater help of grace since the sacramental system has been established, but it is

not of these things our Lord seems here to speak. To be good is to be good. We all know the difference between right and wrong. The commandments of the Decalogue are the same now as they were in the days of Moses, and if a man keep the commandments what more can be asked of him? So there is found very commonly among men the feeling that there is not needed any especial presence of the Holy Ghost in the world in order to make plain what is right and wrong in human conduct. The patriarchs and prophets of Old Testament days understand about sin and righteousness and judgment. What then is there peculiar about the way in which the Holy Ghost is to convince men concerning these things, since our Lord's ascension into heaven?

II. Let us hear what the Master says upon the subject. The Holy Ghost is to reprove, or bring home to the world the conviction of sin, because they believe not on our Lord. Doubtless there is a plenty of sin upon the souls of men who never heard of the Master Christ, yet this is a special sort of sin, and one which now lies at the door of every one who believes not on Him. What is meant by believing on Him? It cannot be any other thing than accepting the obligation of personal loyalty to Him, and engaging in His service. It is not enough that a man should say, "I believe Christ to be a very holy and wonderful Teacher, and to have enlightened the world with many most blessed truths." One might speak thus of any great teacher; one may stand off and admire His person and character and doctrine, but that is not what is meant by believing on Him.

To believe on Him is to accept Him as one's God, and to surrender one's life to Him. Where do we find the obligation to do this?

(1) We admit that we cannot set aside our blood relationship without sin. A man cannot ignore his father and mother, and refuse to minister to them in their old age, without incurring the condemnation of every right-thinking one. Filial impiety is almost everywhere reckoned a grievous sin.

(2) Nor can one deliberately set aside the obligations of *gratitude* in the case of a fellow man who has rescued one from tremendous peril, perhaps at great risk to himself; who has, as it were, by his heroism given one back one's life that was surely lost. Any man who ignores the obligation of gratitude is rightly condemned by other noble men.

(3) Yet again, one cannot set aside the plain duty of succoring a needy fellow creature in dire distress; the traveller by the roadside whom the thieves have stripped and wounded, calls for a help and a sympathy which every right-hearted man must give; he who would refuse to help such an one would justly merit the condemnation of humanity as a hard and unfeeling person.

(4) And when we are brought face to face, as we are in this Christian land (so-called) in our modern civilization and education, with the personality of the Master Christ, the most conspicuous, easily the wisest and holiest of the teachers of men, we cannot ignore that personality without sin. Why do I say without *sin*, for what has sin to do with it? Because He claimed to be the messenger of God to the

world, and indeed many things were done by Him to authenticate His claim. There is every reason to believe that He was a messenger from God, and a messenger from God cannot be ignored by the rational creatures of God without sin. It remains true then that in the very large majority of cases, men do not believe on Him because they will not trouble themselves to do so. There are few indeed who have conscientiously looked into the evidence for our Lord's divine mission, and have found themselves unable to believe Him, but have come to the conclusion that He was an imposter or a self-deceived fanatic. There are millions in our own land and in other lands, who know about Him historically, but who do not believe on Him because they will not trouble themselves even to think of Him, they are not interested in the matter of His personality and work. And that is sin. The Holy Ghost in the world convicts such men of sin because the matter is too serious to be thus lightly dismissed; God will not be so carelessly treated by His creatures.

III. Again, the Holy Ghost reproves the world of righteousness because our Lord has ascended into heaven, and is no more visible upon earth. The world has its standards of righteousness; but they are almost always negative. A man is here reckoned upright because he does not do anything wrong. That is as far as most people get in their conception of righteousness. You say of a man that he is not bad, and that is your idea of goodness. Perhaps there is much that is positive about his goodness, that he is warm-hearted and generous in helping his neigh-

bours. That is certainly a most estimable quality. But the type of righteousness, which our Lord illustrated was much more positive than this. It was a righteousness which consisted in the direct effort all the time to glorify God and to further His will. It recognized man as having come forth from God, and as destined to return to Him again. And the qualification for return was righteousness. The symbolism of Holy Writ represents our first parents before they fell as clothed in a garment of supernatural holiness, which made them natural companions of celestial visitors, and not unmeet to stand in the presence of God Himself. Then when they had transgressed, they lost this white raiment of sanctity, and became naked. Righteousness means the being clothed again in holiness, made fit for the presence of God. So the Master made plain the truth concerning Himself and His righteousness by ascending into the heavens and being no more seen of men on earth; for the celestial righteousness has its proper sphere of enjoyment not here upon earth, but in paradise. The Holy Ghost convinces men of righteousness by pointing them to the life of our Lord. For His was no vain pursuit of all manner of spiritual excellence in order that He might simply attain to sanctity for the sake of attaining to it; but that, being sanctified, He might enter in His human nature into the sphere of celestial being. So the Holy Ghost is ever pointing the would-be righteous ones of this world to the Master Christ, asking them, as it were, What think you of Him, and of His character? The type of His living was such that it made Him at home with God,

so that when the temporal days were over, He must naturally return to Him from whom His spirit in the first instance came. In other words, the righteousness of which the Spirit reproves men is not an earthly type.

It involves devotion, the constant exercise of the soul in prayer and holy spiritual pursuits. These are practically unknown to a great many of the good people of this world. Think of the Master rising up a great while before day, and betaking Himself far away to a desert place, high up on a hill, in order that He might the more uninterruptedly pray to His heavenly Father! How much of that sort of thing do we find among the world's righteous ones? Too often it is true that where there are the most exemplary families, and the most upright of honest lives, there is an utter ignorance of God and of the things of eternity. Men live as if there was no hereafter to think about; they do not worship, they do not pray, and as for partaking of the ordinances of the Master's religion they are not in any wise concerned about them. This one has not been baptized, that one has never been confirmed. This one has been confirmed indeed, but he does not ever go to Communion to partake of the Lord's Body and Blood. He is none the worse man for that, one says, he sets an example in his every day life of righteousness to many a professing Christian. Yes, but he knows nothing of the righteousness of that Christ-life which passes on through this world concerned supremely with the things of God, then goes to the Father and is seen no more. But are these who do not pray, nor worship,

nor use sacraments, going to the Father? If they are, they have given to men no sign that they seek such a destination. The righteousness of Christ involves more than the uprightness of this world. It involves the living for the attainment of a type of humanity of which this world cannot even conceive, a humanity at home with God on high.

IV. The Holy Ghost is further to convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged. Who is the prince of this world? Satan, but he often disguises himself so that his evil nature is not apparent to men; he is often only the worldly-minded one pursuing temporal gain. We shall never know in this world the full significance of our Lord's two great conflicts with the Evil One. The first in the wilderness, when Satan would tempt the Master with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; but was repulsed. Then his judgment was begun; sentence was pronounced by the Master's emphatic dealing with those temptations. The prince of this world was judged when he said to him, "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." But that judgment was completed when the tempter came to Him in Gethsemane, to try if it were possible to induce Him to so shrink from the anguish of the cross that He should refuse to die. Then was judgment finally passed upon that Evil One, then was the prince of this world cast out. And ever since that time God's servants have been giving proof of the power of the Holy Ghost, that the prince of this world has been judged. They will not accept

his dominion, they show in every way their abhorrence and their rejection of his kingdom. Yet what is there so dreadful in the life of this world, one may say? Might not the Master have innocently turned stones into bread that He might eat when hungry? Might He not without sin have won the world by casting Himself down unhurt from the pinnacle of the temple? Might He not have stooped to formal obeisance of Satan without real disloyalty to God, in order to win greater wealth than that of the Indies for the uplifting of His Church? Might He not without sin have declined to bear the burdens of the world's transgressions, and have allowed the guilty children of men to suffer the punishment they so richly deserved? Yet there are, thank God, millions among mankind who have in the Master's spirit deliberately set aside all of Satan's riches; refused to eat bread when God willed them to fast; refused to win applause when God called them to humility; refused to trifle in the smallest degree with loyalty to Him for the sake of any worldly advantage; aye, refused to save their lives when He called them to imitate Him in the free surrendering of them. And thus Satan is being judged to-day, and the men of this world look on and cannot fail to note the phenomenon though they but ridicule and deride it. Yet it is not hard to read the lesson of this judgment of Satan by the faithful servants of Christ. It is an omen of the impending final judgment; it tells that such courses as those of the Evil One must all be punished sooner or later by a sentence which in that day cannot be despised and ridiculed. So the world

is reprov'd of judgment continually by the fact that the prince of it, Satan himself, has been judged and condemned by the blessed Gospel of Christ.

V. It is fair to assume that in a general congregation there are a good many people who are not formal professors of religion, people who are good according to the world's standards, but who are not active Church members, who perhaps never avail themselves of the sacraments. It is to such in the first place that the Spirit of God would bring conviction of sin and righteousness and judgment. But there are regular users of the sacraments, devoted Church members, whom also He would reprove of these great realities by His presence in the world.

(1) For example, how many of us are there who really believe on our Lord as He would have us believe on Him? That is with a great personal devotion to Him as the Leader and Prince of our lives; so that we are consciously living for Him, seeking supremely to do His will and to please Him; everything else in life subordinate to that. I fancy that there are few of us who believe on Him after this sort. If we did we should certainly show more enthusiasm in our Christian life, more faith, more unworldliness. The Spirit of God reproves us of sin because we do not believe on Him as we ought. It is the height of sin in us because we have had experience of His goodness and love, we know just what He is and the supreme claim which He has upon us and upon all that we have. One can well believe that the greatest thing to be charged against many of the

servants of God at the last day will be their practical want of faith in our Lord.

(2) The Holy Ghost reproves the believer also of righteousness, because our Lord has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of the Father there. We cannot pretend to any doubt concerning the type of righteousness at which we are to aim, but as a matter of fact we are ever protesting in our hearts that that is too high for us, and that we cannot be expected to reach up to it. It is the righteousness of our Lord, the righteousness of the saints, pure, white holiness which ascends into heaven and leaves the earth far behind. We do not often aim at this, and when we do for a little moment of earnestness, we speedily fall back again into the less exalted ways. The sanctity of which our Lord furnishes the type is the only one possible for the believer; yet which of us ever strives perseveringly after it?

(3) Once more the Holy Ghost reproves the believer, as well as the world, of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged. The cleavage between the ways of the world and those of the kingdom of God is plain enough, and with every succeeding age it ought to grow plainer, for in every age the ranks of those who have cut themselves aloof from Satan's worldly ways, to follow the self-denying example of the Master, are added to. Every time it is apparent to us that this or that one of our friends in the kingdom of God has refused to live for this world's ease and enjoyment, for the prizes of the present life, it is shown us that Satan has been judged and found wanting. And every such instance

of judgment is a reminder of the fact that the first judgment of each one's life shall be with regard to this very point, of the forsaking or the cleaving to the prince of this world. It is very alluring to be promised a pleasant time here, with ease and comfort and friends and health and prosperity. Satan promises all these very freely, albeit he generally lies when he so promises—what matters that if he can but get the children of men to believe him? And so those only are wise who are warned by the divine Spirit of the judgment which must come, and themselves judge the prince of this world at his true worth, and put him and his works quite aside.

VI. Who would say that the world was greatly different now from what it was in the old times before our Lord came? Man has made wonderful progress in all sorts of ways, but what other difference is there? The answer of the Christian is that the Holy Ghost has come, and that wherever the news of the Gospel has spread, there His presence makes an incalculable difference in human conditions from that which would have been had He not come. He stands as a Reprover, as One who forces home convictions upon men which they cannot escape; the certainty that the Blessed Christ is what He declared Himself to be, and that no one may refuse to believe on Him without tremendous sin; the certainty that the type of life which that Blessed Christ led is the only one which is pleasing to God, and the only one which can exalt the soul to celestial glory, therefore there is no true righteousness but in loyalty to Him; the certainty that the prince of this world was

wholly discomfited and spoiled of his dominion by the Master, and that like judgment shall follow upon all who do not themselves judge that Evil One false and hateful, and separate themselves wholly from him.

NEEDING NOT TO ASK

“And none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who are Thou? knowing that it was the Lord.”—(St. John xxi. 12.)

THEY were very wonderful days, those great forty days which elapsed after our Lord's resurrection before His ascension into heaven. Perhaps the first thing which astonishes us in regard to them is the fact that our Lord reveals Himself so sparingly, as it were. We would think there was so much to be said and done for His Church's welfare before His going quite away, that every moment of those forty days would have been utilized in giving final instructions to His disciples. Apparently, however, He is less often with them than He is away from them. He has so little to say to them apparently concerning the future of the Church, that it can all be said in comparatively few interviews. We are not told indeed how often the Master met with His chosen ones to speak with them after He rose from the dead, but it is not likely the occasions were very many, and there is no manifestation of any sense of urgency in the meetings of which we have record.

He made Himself known to them as risen from the dead first in Jerusalem on Easter day, and then on the next Sunday. It is not recorded that He revealed Himself at all during the week between those two Sundays. Then the Apostles were reminded that they were to go into Galilee for further meetings with the risen Lord. It chanced that at some time in the following week, seven of them were together on the shores of the lake of Gennesaret, very likely at Bethsaida, their old home. There is no reason to think that they had lost faith in any wise in the Master's promise to meet them in Galilee, but in the sacred narrative the lack of impatience which the Apostles show is very remarkable. They are ready to return to their old occupation, while they wait for Him to come; there is no feverishness of expectation. St. Peter announces his intention of going a-fishing. The rest say that they will go with him. All night long they fish patiently, but in vain; there is no catch. The dawn is just coming; they are not far from shore in their fishing boat, and in the half-light they perceive Some One standing on the shore, apparently interested in what they are doing. Very likely they thought Him some zealous purchaser, eager to secure betimes their fish. "Children," that is the kindly manner of address used by one who is their social superior, "have ye any meat?" He says. They had not; not a single fish had rewarded their all-night toil. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship," He calls, "and ye shall find." What made them at once obey one who seemed to them a stranger? One does not know; but they did, and

now they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes. St. John was the first to realize what the miracle meant, for he was the most spiritual of them. He said to St. Peter, "It is the Lord." Then they were all sure of it. Quickly they brought the ship to the shore—not quickly enough indeed for St. Peter, who must plunge into the lake and swim to where his Lord stood. The Master invites them to dine, He has prepared bread and fish for them. Then we are told that none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing it was the Lord. They must have had many things they would like to ask Him, but they were awed. It was all so mysterious, so simple and yet so inexplicable. But they knew He was their Lord, and one can quite understand that that knowledge satisfied them. He would tell them more about Himself when it pleased Him.

I. On Rogation Sunday we are made to think of asking, of prayer in its widest sense, but also of *questioning*. We want to know so many things. Life is full of puzzles, and we wish so much that they might be explained to us. It may be indeed that we have not so much awe of our Lord as the Apostles had that morning on the shore of the sea of Galilee. We ask very freely, we almost demand an explanation of the divine mysteries, and we find fault with our religion because its deep things are beyond our understanding. We assume that everything ought to be made plain to us; yet the moment we stop to think about it we realize that that is a very absurd position to take. It would argue an exceedingly small and finite religion, if all its mysteries were

easily comprehensible by our finite minds. Our Lord in the text seems to teach us that it is enough for us to know *Him*. It is well for us to recognize this fact plainly in our religious life, that the foundation of our faith, indeed the only fundamental thing about it, is our conviction of our Lord's divinity. That is the doctrine which the world generally will never accept, the doctrine against which Satan contends tirelessly with all his might, the doctrine which sooner or later every form of heresy comes to deny. As in our text the Apostles had no need to ask the Master, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord, so we have no need to be curiously questioning various beliefs and practices of our religion if once we have accepted from the heart the reality of His divinity. Let us then settle it clearly in our minds before we go on any further, why we are sure of our Lord's divine character and personality.

(1) In the first place, it is because His character and personality as declared to us by the Church are abundantly demonstrated by the history of our religion. Here is the Gospel system which has come down for almost two thousand years from the obscure country of Judea, and has overspread the whole civilized world. It has made its way into the hearts of millions despite the fact that it brings no temporal advantage, but warns its followers to look for persecution and death, preaching always non-resistance of evil instead of retaliation; it foretells in this world only hardship and self-denial, with but the promise of something better beyond the grave, and that promise itself conditioned on a life of well-nigh impossi-

ble loyalty to a superhuman standard of living. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the world; how could it have survived and conquered the nations as it has, had it not been divine?

(2) Moreover, in the second place, the character and personality of our Lord as declared by the Church are attested in the most superhuman fashion by the Bible narrative. It is not merely that the Gospel delineation of our Lord is most marvellous and unearthly, a type of character which could not have been invented by the cleverest writer of romance, but it likewise perfectly realizes the prophecies of the ancient Scriptures, which, though you minimize them to the utmost limit to which modern criticism has gone, you will yet find to present a problem of fact which nothing but the supernatural origin of our religion can solve. It is not to be forgotten that our faith does not depend upon our Lord's miracles, as people sometimes seem to fancy that it does, so that if they could persuade themselves with some characters in fiction that "miracles do not happen," they should have annihilated the evidence for the divinity of the Master. It does not at all depend on the miracles; there is all that great weight of Old Testament Scripture, a strange yet most unmistakable thread of prediction about some one who under the most unheard-of circumstances is to effect the world's redemption from sin; a chain of testimony accumulating for centuries, whether for two or three or for fifteen it matters little; perfectly inexplicable except by the Christian story of the gra-

cious Saviour; but in the light of that story all plain and simple, though most marvellous.

(3) There is a third way in which the character and personality of our Lord are vouched for to His people, though indeed it is not a way which appeals to one who is not His disciple. It consists in a deep inward conviction of the truth of all that the Church teaches us about Him, resulting from acquaintance with Him in the channels of the devout life. We are not deceived in this testimony of consciousness. It does not constitute indeed any argument for the man who has never in his own heart experienced a similar thing, but for ourselves it is impressive beyond words in the certainty which it brings home to us, enabling one to say, "I know whom I have believed." There is no mistaking the sense of His presence, the reality of the way in which He answers prayer, the conviction forced home upon one by prolonged experience of the blessedness of the fact that if one ask anything in His name, He will do it.

II. Because however there is this fundamental certainty in our spiritual selves as to the person and character of our Master, the fact that there remain mysteries in our religion is not taken away. Let us just note in passing some of the more conspicuous of these mysteries, and let us frankly acknowledge them to be mysteries.

(1) There is the doctrine of the Trinity. I believe with all my whole being that God is but *one* God, yet also that there are in the divine Substance fundamental distinctions which constitute three incommunicable individualities, so that the Church

teaches three Persons in the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. I cannot pretend to explain this truth, nor to reconcile by human reasoning the three Persons with the one undivided Substance of Deity, yet I do not have trouble with the mystery because it is of the divine things, and they must naturally be over and above the human comprehension.

(2) There is the doctrine of the Incarnation; that the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity chose to take to Himself human nature, for us men and for our salvation. The fact that the blessed Christ is both God and man involves one in all sorts of apparent contradictions from the human point of view, but it does not prove a stumbling block to one's faith because one does not expect to be able to comprehend the things of the infinite Being.

(3) There is the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, in a way not unlike that of the Incarnation. The consecrated species upon the altar are our Lord's true Body and Blood. It is impossible, the human mind says; you are insisting upon a miracle without any demonstration of a miracle; how can one believe such a thing? I grant you that I cannot explain it, but I am not vain enough to suppose that I ought to be able to explain all the wonderful works of God. There ought to be mysteries to man's understanding, where God is working. But the mystery is no difficulty to my faith.

(4) Take again the marvel of what we call Sanctification, something infinitely more astonishing than the evolution which this world's philosophy teaches; that man, such as we know him, is to be

transformed by certain sacramental processes into a being wholly spiritual and celestial, raised out of the sphere of the finite, and introduced to the infinite, with capacity to enjoy it eternally. This is what sanctification proposes to effect in our nature, and the agencies used are simple ordinances of the solemn use of water, of bread and wine, of the bishop's hand, of holy oil. The thing is beyond all explanation. Why should the believer be troubled because he cannot understand it as he understands many of the changes of this world's life? Is it not what we ought to expect, that the ways of God should transcend our finite comprehension?

(5) Yet once more; think of the mystery of heaven and hell, the eternal bliss of the saints, the everlasting woe of the lost in the outer darkness. One says I never can believe there is a hopeless and eternal hell for anyone, for I cannot conceive of such a thing. After all that is not remarkable, for it is a supernatural thing, and it would be strange if our finite understanding could conceive the supernatural. Mysteries are only what we should expect to find in the divine revelation.

III. There is with you in a graceful launch upon the lake on a fair summer day a young boy. He knows just what he has to do with the small engine in the boat's stern, what he must open, what he must close, what to turn this way and what that. You look on in wonder at his confidence, which indeed seems well founded. "Do you understand all the mechanism of this engine," you ask of him, "why such and such things produce such and such re-

sults?" "No," he replies, "I do not understand the engine, but I hope to do so some day. I know what I must do to make the boat go, to move faster or slower, forward or astern, for my father has taught me all these things. He understands the machinery perfectly in every part. He can explain it all to you without any trouble, but he says I am not yet old enough to understand it, and that it is not necessary that I should. I have only to do what he tells me to do, and I am sure that nothing will go wrong, for he knows perfectly all about it." That is the confidence of the child, you see, in his father. If the father understands, it is not needful that the child should. He has but to follow that father's instructions, and to trust him, and the confidence is not misplaced.

IV. So we are, or we ought to be, with God our Lord. We have absolute trust in His personality, and we know that we cannot make any mistake in our confidence in that. The Apostles durst not ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord. We are well aware that the mysteries are not mysteries to Him, all things are simply and wholly solved by His divine wisdom, and it is a very small matter indeed whether or not we are able to comprehend them. But He is glad to have us learn the solution of the mysteries for ourselves. The father delights to have his child talk to him of that wonderful machinery which interests him so much, and he explains all its workings with infinite patience, little by little, as the child is able to comprehend them. So, in like manner, God would have us understand the mysteries. Therefore He says: "Hitherto have ye asked noth-

ing in My name; ask and receive, that your joy may be full." We are not to give up the mysteries as insoluble, but only to recognize the fact that the solution of them is to be found in that gradual acquaintance with them which is begotten of a hearty use of the ordinances in which they find expression. They come to one more and more, as one goes on heartily and systematically using them, even as it is with every other study, until the familiarity makes us perfectly at home in them though they are still but imperfectly understood, and the fulness of their meaning dawns on the wondering disciple increasingly.

V. We are not to look for the perfect illumination however until the last day of the world, or it may indeed be the last day of our own mortal lives. Now we ask more and more, reverently let us hope, and desirous of knowing only what it shall please our Lord to reveal to us. Howbeit there shall come a day when in the half light of the dawning of the other world, the passing soul shall discern the figure of a Waiting One on the shore, as the sea of this life is almost crossed; for so there is reason to believe that the Lord comes to meet His faithful ones in the day of their departure out of this world. Then faith shall whisper to action, It is the Lord, and action shall swim out boldly to Him, across those dark waters of death which still separate from Him. And the glad and awed and silenced soul shall not ask of Him, "Who art Thou?" conscious with supreme conviction that it is the Lord. "In that day," says the Master, "ye shall ask Me nothing." Nothing re-

mains to be asked then. All the mysteries are cleared up, all the strange and puzzling things are plain at last, and the happy soul shall gently rebuke itself in that day, saying, How could I ever have doubted or feared, for I knew that my Lord was God, and surely all things must be right when they are in His hands.

PARTED FROM THEM AND CARRIED UP

"And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—(St. Luke xxiv. 51.)

THERE is a very perplexing mystery about our Lord's relation to ourselves in His incarnation, a mystery which will never be solved in this world, and a mystery which has caused men who would not accept it with patience as beyond their finite comprehension, to err grievously from the faith, falling into divers heresies. It may be stated to be the mystery of the necessarily sinless character of the humanity which the divine Word assumed. He could come in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, but He could not come in *sinful* flesh; He could voluntarily undergo all the penalty of human sin, but He could not possibly have any of the guilt of human sin. Therefore in all sorts of ways in His earthly life He is like us, He comes very near to us, while also there is something which makes Him wholly unlike us and infinitely removed from us. He is born of a

human mother, as all of us are born, yet, in His birth He is fundamentally distinct from us because He had no human father. He was born of fallen nature, yet His nature was unfallen. Again, when He comes to be tempted, He is assailed by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, even as we are, yet there was never the smallest suggestion of sinful impulse in His soul to respond to the allurements of the tempter from without. That never can be so with us, nevertheless we must believe that He was as truly and as fiercely tempted as ever we have been or can be. And all the time, too, it was impossible that He should sin. Or if we turn to such wonderful manifestations of the supernatural character of His humanity as the walking on the sea, or the transfiguration, we shall not fail to perceive that there was a quality about the body of flesh and bones which He had taken, separating it immensely from our poor bodies. We are taught to see in His rising from the dead the pledge and type of our own resurrection at the last day, yet we cannot fail instantly to note that He took up His holy body on Easter day, even as He had laid it down on Good Friday; whereas before our flesh can be raised it must corrupt, turn to dust, and be quickened again by the Lord when the last trump shall sound. About His ascension there is something quite as marvellous, for in the flesh He rises glorious in the sky until a cloud receives Him out of the sight of His faithful ones, whereas His servants must through long processes of purification and preparation, go on in soul step by step up the stairs of God, at last reaching

paradise, there to wait still bodiless, until the last great day shall give them back their dwelling places of flesh. You see in all these instances the Master becomes our type and example, while yet showing Himself in a very marked way altogether distinct from ourselves. It is perhaps still more wonderful that, despite this broad line of separation between His humanity and ours, that humanity should in a very real way be the assurance to us of our own beatification. And of course the solution of the mystery is found in the Christian doctrine that our humanity is to be incorporated into His, and transformed by that incorporation, so that the things which are true of Him shall become true of us. But on the other hand the measureless natural difference between the humanity of our Lord and that of ourselves, brings home forcibly to our minds that the only hope we have of such a glorious destiny springs from the possibility of vital union with Him, which the Church promises to effect.

I. It is very hard for men to realize that their only hope of a blissful immortality lies in a complete transformation of their nature. It is a tribute to the excellence of our earthly life that we should fancy no other type of being could improve upon this, if only we could develop this to its best. We are very skeptical about the bliss of heaven being greater than the perfection of earthly bliss, of which we can here conceive. We declare that we shall be quite content if our future may be as joyous as we can fancy this world being, were our circumstances here just what our wills would make them. We long

and sigh for our dear departed ones to come back, if it were only for a little, to let us know how it fares with them. We are sure that they must want to come to us, to speak with us, to assure us of their affection. Yet they never do. If we may believe—which I do not—that in some instances, rare ones, the dead have communicated with the living who are dear to them, it has but been in some fashion which was no real and joyous entering into the old life at all. They do not return to that ever, there is no reason to suppose that they are interested in it any more. They doubtless feel interest in us, but I fancy only in the way that we may attain to everlasting joy. They would say to us, could they come back, “O blind ones, do not dwell upon and think about the things of the world, earthly needs, earthly joys, earthly hopes and fears, but bend every energy to the saving of your souls, for that is the one thing that is worth working for, and the magnitude of its importance is something that you cannot conceive of till you have come hither.” The Lord Christ came back indeed for forty days after He rose from the dead, yet here again we have an instance of the vast difference between His case and ours. Even so you perceive instantly in the sacred narrative of the Gospel that His intercourse with His chosen ones was in no sense like that which it had been before His death. He does not appear during the great forty days to have dwelt with them at all, as He had been wont to do, but only as it were to come to them for a part of each day, to instruct and commission them, and then to vanish out of their sight, and to be gone as com-

pletely as if He had left the earth. And one easily perceives that this return of His during the forty days before He had ascended was not to be a type for the souls of His followers after their departure from the world. He came back to give proof of His resurrection, to speak of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, perhaps for other reasons not revealed to us. His soul was fit, of course, to enter into the courts of heaven; indeed there is no reason to suppose that it had not all along, from the first instant of its possession of the fleshly body, been enjoying the Beatific Vision, which makes heaven to be heaven. But the souls of His followers, after their going forth from the body, must learn slowly, perhaps painfully, in the land of purification, the country of preparation, the things which enable the creature to look upon the Creator and not be consumed.

II. Very beautiful, very graphic is the tale of the ascension. That morning He meets them early, in Jerusalem. We may believe it was quite early, perhaps hardly any one yet stirring in the holy city. Or if there were people about, He willed it that they should not pay any embarrassing attention to the little band of His faithful ones, probably the one hundred and twenty afterwards spoken of. They are all ready. He leads them forth outside the city, across the brook Cedron, up the gentle slopes of Olivet, as far as Bethany. He speaks His farewell words. He lifts up His hands in blessing. While He blesses He is parted from them, He is perceived to be ascending, floating up as it were, because no longer was there anything to hold Him down to earth.

It is felt that He is going naturally to His own celestial place. Yet His heart lingers with them. The whole description is as though He would prolong the actual separation as much as possible. He is looking fondly down upon them as He mounts up. His hands are still outstretched in blessing. They can see the prints of the nails still in them. Presently a bright cloud envelops the Lord; He disappears from their gaze. The cloud, in a little while, is dissipated, it has floated away, only the clear blue vault of the sky is over them now, but the Lord has disappeared. How wonderful the whole story is, so natural yet so utterly supernatural too; one can picture it all vividly, and then try to think what it means. The physical has penetrated the realm of the spiritual. The material body of flesh and bones has entered into the kingdom of things immaterial. It is as though one of the inscrutable problems of our human existence had been solved, the relation of soul to body, the principle of life, or any other of those deep mysteries which plague the investigating student and cause the devout to marvel ever more and more. There appeared to be something like this when Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind, yet it is not held by the Church that he in his flesh entered into the celestial realms; certainly no one could do that before the Lord had first Himself gone up and opened the way. Moreover, it has been believed that Elijah must come back to earth some day, and die before he can in the strict sense ascend into heaven. During these ages of the world God is keeping him safely in some pleasant place, waiting for the time

when he shall be sent in the days of Antichrist to bear witness for the Lord, and then to be put to death.

No sooner had the radiant form of the Master been lost to view in the encompassing cloud, but the enraptured Apostles beheld two white-robed celestial creatures in their midst, which say, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." So they had full assurance that their Lord had indeed mounted to His heavenly throne, and in most joyous consciousness of that fact and with abounding enthusiasm because of it, they returned to Jerusalem to take up the work which He had left for them to do. There is, to my thinking, something very fine and grand in this return of the Eleven with great joy to the holy city after our Lord's ascension. It shows how completely they had grasped the supernatural character of His kingdom and His service, that they were in no wise disconcerted by the loss of His natural presence from their midst.

III. We leave them for awhile, and turn our attention to what this ascension of our Lord must mean for human nature following along after Him in the story of our race. Men are day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, I suppose, arriving at the termination of this present world, their Jordan or their mount of Olives, and yet there is no reason to think of anything like an ascension for them, certainly not at the time of death. Are we only to understand

and think of it as something typifying the final ascending of the righteous into glory after the judgment of the last day? It would seem as if there were a different notion suggested to us by the fact of our Lord going up in this way, as if that were the real leaving of the earth for Him. I mean that, in one sense, His death on the cross does not so much suggest the thought of our death as His ascension does; because He came back so soon after His death, and was seen for forty days upon the earth after His rising again. We get confused in trying to draw our analogies, and it is all, as I said, because the conditions of His humanity were so different from ours. He, leaving the earth, departs at once, by one mighty leap, as one might say, into the sky. The cloud receives Him out of the sight of His loving ones. So do our dear ones at once, and inevitably, depart from us in the moment of death, and the cloud of the impenetrable future state receives them out of our sight. True, we have the poor wasted body. It is our privilege to lay that away reverently in the ground, and from time to time deck the place with lovely flowers. But what of our departed one?

(1) So far as the true and loyal servants of our Master Christ are concerned, we are sure that they have entered upon the long and most wonderful ascent into beatitude. In His case it was as the bird flies up easily and in an instant to the topmost peak of the hill of God, but in their case, there must be the gradual climbing from stage to stage, up the vast slope until the crest is reached. He soared up to point out the way. He went in the body to tell us

that, when the time for the enjoyment of the celestial life has come, our bodies shall be restored to us noble and glorified, meet for such spiritual quality of being. But all the earthliness must little by little be purged away from the souls of the servants before they can mount the throne realms of the Master. If we could look in upon that other side of the sky, we should doubtless see millions of souls ascending step by step up the slopes of the delectable mountains, some few already almost within the celestial radiance, others far down below, still bearing the penalties of their transgressions committed here, in order that they may be set free from the weight of their many faults, and so be enabled to climb freely.

(2) There are unhappily others among the children of men who have known the blessed truth of God, but have made no genuine effort to live up to it. It may be among ourselves here, some of us who, knowing well enough the grievousness of sin, have been content to continue in sin. There are perhaps—though one shudders to think of it—thousands dying every year who have not done what they could, who have neglected God, perhaps, despised Him; who have been warned in His loving way many times to repent, and have turned a deaf ear to all such warnings. One cannot really doubt that there are many souls which ought to belong to Christ, but which have willingly separated themselves from Him. What of them in that world of shades? There is the fearful descent downward into the abyss there, as well as the long and lovely slope which leads to the land of life. And it is certain that a great multitude of souls de-

scends continually by the way of death into the outer darkness. Happily the cloud receives them also out of our sight, and we fondly cling to the hope, as we have a right to do, that our own beloved dead are climbing aloft on the mountain of God.

(3) Without doubt there is a third class consisting of those who, through no fault or neglect of their own, have failed to learn of God's blessed religion. It is one of the mysteries of His providence that so large a proportion of mankind should never be afforded the opportunity of believing and obeying the Gospel. We have confidence in Him to be sure that there is a wise reason for this, not yet revealed to us, and we have abundant assurance that to every man light and grace sufficient are vouchsafed to enable him to escape eternal woe. The Church has never defined dogmatically concerning the state of the heathen, unbaptized infants, and others who have not been given the opportunity of winning heaven; but the common belief of Christians has been that all who have tried to live faithfully up to what they know, will be happy in the future, and will be conscious of no loss, because they have never received the capacity to know loss, even as the brutes may not be supposed to have any unhappiness in not being made as man; the distinction between man's condition and their own is not one that the brute can mentally appreciate.

IV. But this very fact goes to illustrate that which I am trying to bring out before you in connection with our Lord's ascension, namely, that it gives proof of the future life, to which all believers are

called, being of a more exalted type, in a higher sphere of being than any one can know here, indeed on a plane of existence to which no natural development can uplift one. For if the beatitude which loyal Christians are to attain were not something fundamentally different from any glory to which men might reach by healthful evolution, it is difficult to conceive how the saints should not be objects of envy to those who attain to nothing higher than natural beatitude; and the moment there could be the smallest admixture of envy in heaven, it would cease to be the land of satisfaction, that is, it would cease to be heaven. The ascension of our Lord, setting at nought the fundamental principles of our natural life, declares to us plainly that it is hopeless to look for the attainment of such beatitude as that to which He calls His followers through any development of the best characteristics of our earthly humanity. Man might indeed devise inventions for uplifting his body into the higher atmosphere, and even that it might there soar about as the birds; but that a physical nature should pass from the realm of the material into the kingdom of the spiritual is something no evolution can promise us. One might conceive of the soul, when set free from the body, going on from strength to strength in spiritual attainment until it should be capable of looking upon God, but one cannot conceive of the flesh as so utterly spiritualized. One can conceive of the soul as returning after a long time to earth, and finding that the body which it left to be buried in the ground had awakened into new life, as the plants in the spring-

time, and had recovered its youth and vigour even as the trees seem to do when each new season comes round; but there is no thought of such spiritualizing of flesh and bones as that they become capable of entering within the veil, and taking active part in those realms which are wholly spiritual. We could go on far in our theories of possible evolution into the likeness of the risen life of our Lord during the great forty days, but the ascension is something to which no natural laws will lead us. He will have us remember that it is purely supernatural. As His body was wholly united to the divine Word, sharing in its divinity, so we, by union with that body of His are to become supernaturalized in our flesh, little by little qualified to enter in the flesh into that behind the veil. Mere goodness will never take a man to heaven, in the full and glorious sense of the word. The hope which our Lord's ascension sets before us calls for the sacramental life, for the acquisition from Him, and the development by His grace in us, of a super-human quality, a heavenly essence of being, which enables one to follow the Master in His ascension, not in His resurrection only.

V. To many it sounds like a theory hard to believe, and practically unimportant, a subtlety of theology not calling for serious consideration. If we do right we shall be saved. Aye, but what is right? Is any man doing right who, knowing about the sacraments and their divine institution, refuses to avail himself of them? Can we suppose that our Lord instituted such solemn ordinances if they were of no great importance to the believer? One cannot but

think that the judgment of the Master will be very severe on those for whom He has provided such great things, if they, realizing that He has so provided them, shall still lightly decide that they are of no great importance, and can be dispensed with with impunity because they are irksome in practice, and humiliating to one's self love.

THE ASCENDED LORD

“I go to prepare a place for you.”—(St. John xiv. 2.)

THERE is something very magnificent, one might almost say dramatic, in the thought of the regaining of paradise by mankind through our Lord on Ascension day. For paradise was closed to sinful men after the transgression of our first parents. What became of the garden of Eden after their expulsion we are not told. It would seem likely that it remained in its beauty and in its uninhabited condition until the flood, and that after the change made in the face of the earth by that cataclysm, Eden was no longer anywhere to be seen, but that where it had been was now open to mankind, as was all the rest of earth's surface. It was not the good purpose of God that when His fallen creature should be redeemed it should be to restoration to an earthly paradise, but to that celestial paradise of which the earthly Eden was a type, the country of the saints on high. Nevermore could man find entrance there until he had undone the mischief of the fall. It was our Lord alone, Who was able to do this. Coming

in His innocency, without taint of original sin, He met all the assaults of the Evil One triumphantly, and so was found worthy of an entrance into heaven in His humanity. He needed not to knock long and loud at the pearly gates of the celestial city, for the warders were already watching for Him to come up, and were on the alert to throw wide open those gates just so soon as He the King of glory appeared. But He had done much more than win entrance into paradise for Himself. By His death He had forever vanquished Satan, and won the right to set free his captives, long held in the prison house of hades beneath the earth. After His death on Good Friday He descended into that land of shades and there harrowed hell, turning their house of detention for the blessed ones into paradise, a second garden of Eden, wherein perhaps Adam and Eve could find reproduced all those lovely things which they remembered in the first garden, though that was so long before. On Ascension day that temporary paradise was closed also, for thenceforth the paradise of God is heaven itself, wherein His holy ones see Him face to face and are satisfied. Ever since that first joyous Ascension day the route to heaven is open to all who will walk in it as the Master teaches them to. There is the hard stretch of tribulation here in this world, and of temptation, that we may win, or show ourselves indisposed to win, eternity; after this world, for the accepted ones there is the long dark valley of purgatory; and then, at last, after that, the passing through the gates of pearl into the country of the blessed, the fatherland of God's people.

I. Let us then ask ourselves, as we gaze upon the Lord entering on this glad festival in His human nature into the paradise which is on high, for *what* He thus went up, ascending to the Father's throne? And we shall find that Holy Scripture gives us at least three reasons for His entrance into heaven. He Himself tells us the first in the words of our text: "I go to prepare a place for you." He begins His word by saying to His disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions." We may not be sure just what He means by mansions in heaven, but the thought is plainly of an abiding place, a home if you please. But if the mansions are already there, why does He speak of preparing a place for His people? Perhaps—I say *perhaps* because we have no certain ground on which to tread at this point—because those mansions were formerly occupied by the angels who fell and lost their first estate. It is the way of the divine working not merely to restore things as they were before. God did not will to create more angels to take the places of those fallen ones, but He willed to bring into being the human race for those vacant mansions. And because it is the way of His kingdom that it should ever be a place of boundless activities, so for the glorified spirits of the human species it is His purpose to have a kingdom in which they may find in eternity the most complete exercise of all their powers and faculties in ever joyous service. Therefore He now prepares for them a kingdom, the kingdom of His dear Son, that kingdom which shall have no end. And because that kingdom will not be complete until the power of evil shall

have been utterly destroyed, and the regeneration of the universe have taken place, therefore He is said to be preparing a place for them; and though the many mansions do not wait idly for inhabitants, but are being filled up day by day, as the blessed ones issue forth from purgatory altogether sanctified, nevertheless the place for the joyous exercise of the beatified life shall not be wholly prepared until the last great day of judgment. Then shall the King say to them on His right hand, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," for it was always so prepared in the divine predestination, but it is not given to the blessed ones to inherit until the Father's full time shall have come. In that prepared place each one of the blessed shall find his own glorious vocation designed for him alone, and he himself so definitely fitted for it, that it manifestly belongs to him as it could to no other in all the vast host of the redeemed. So does each one's individuality remain, and his chosen place is appointed him of God as prepared for him eternally.

II. And that thought of the preparing of the kingdom by our Lord in heaven carries us on to the contemplation of His own marvellous part in the work of preparation. He must be thought of on Ascension day in His humanity, for it is only as man that He can be spoken of as ascending into heaven, seeing that He did not leave heaven in order to come down to earth. Nor is it merely as man, but as the head of the human race we ought to think of Him there in heaven now at the Father's right hand, our

Prince and Chief. And it is His mediatorial or temporal kingdom in which He is now reigning as man, the kingdom which as such comes to its end at the day of judgment, for then its work will be wholly completed, the divine place will have been prepared for the elect, the universe restored.

(1) First, then, the Lord's work as the Head of our race, at the Father's right hand in heaven, is the priestly work of intercession, soliciting our pardon continually from the Father, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us. A quaint old picture represents the divine Son as kneeling in His priestly robes before the Father, the various instruments of the passion all beside Him upon the ground, and He recounting in connection with them His merits, His labours, His sufferings, through which we have pardon. This is His priestly work in heaven. For His priests here upon earth do not, upon ascending into heaven as blessed saints, if they be so happy as thus to attain beatitude, continue to exercise their priestly office. That was but for this world. Those among the saints who are priests intercede as do the rest of the blessed ones for the faithful here upon earth and in purgatory; they have, however, no longer any sacrifice to offer; but the Master is a priest forever, and continues as a priest to plead His most holy death upon the cross with all its merits for our salvation.

(2) Secondly, there is His work of prayer for His Church. For our Lord does not cease to pray for us now that He is glorified. It is part of that intercession of which the Apostle speaks in Romans viii. 34, to beseech for us even as He did so contin-

ually when He was upon the earth. The saints pray and pray continually for us, and we ask their prayers according to the will of God, but we do not ask our Lord's prayers, although that were not unlawful when we think of His humanity; rather do we dwell on that which is more glorious in Him, we beseech Him as God to give us those things for which we beg, and not to pray for them on our behalf as man. There is something inexpressibly touching in this thought of our Lord's perpetual exercise of His humanity in praying for us, even though He is glorified in heaven; and it ought to shame us who are so soon weary in prayer, and count it hard to have to intercede for very many about us.

III. Then we pass on naturally to that second part of the preparing of the place for us in which our Lord Christ is now engaged in the heavens. Prayer is a mighty thing, but it is not the only thing. We ought to pray tirelessly for our fellows, yet besides that we should do all that God has put it in our power to do to help by our own deeds of mercy; therefore alms ever go rightly along with prayers in helping our neighbours, just as fasting should ever accompany our prayers when we seek help for ourselves. Our Master Christ we are told ascended up on high that He might give gifts unto men. What then were these gifts? The Apostle in Ephesians iv. tells us that "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ." In which it is to be noted that His minis-

ters are made the vehicles, the agents, if you please, for the dispensing of the divine grace. This is what the Apostle says elsewhere, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." To be sure the Apostle dwells preëminently upon the *teaching* work of the ministry, for that was naturally the most obvious one in the day when the whole world was to be evangelized. But he does not overlook the work of building up the faithful in the divine grace, for he includes as among the gifts of the risen Lord to His Church the *pastorate*, which means the work of the shepherd in daily ministering to His flock. The rest of Holy Scripture makes it plain enough that the great gift of the ascended Lord was the pentecostal gift, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the infant Church. The gifts of the Holy Ghost include not only the ministry but the sacraments as well, which the ministry is to dispense.

(1) It is to be carefully noted that the Apostle speaks of the purpose of these celestial gifts to the Church as the edifying of the body of Christ (edifying means, as most of you know, building up, as a house is built), until we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. You see it is that daring dream of paradise regained by the individual as well as by the Head of the race. Our religion will not let us stop at anything short of this. Our Lord does not dispense gifts from His throne in heaven that the world may grow fair and peaceful again, and Eden be *here* restored. No doubt the preaching of the Gospel has ameliorated the condition of man-

kind in many ways, nevertheless that is not the end which is sought in that preaching, but the upraising of fallen humanity to Christ-likeness *in heaven*. There is no stopping short of this ideal; no one will get to heaven until he has come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and it may be that the working out of that ideal will require many long years in purgatory. But here in this world it is the work of the divine grace, and the gifts of grace are those which the ascended Lord bestows upon His Church.

(2) There is first the gift of regeneration, the new birth, for we cannot become God's children until we have been born again. This is the first step in the regaining of paradise by fallen man. For Adam and Eve died spiritually when they sinned, nor could any of their progeny inherit the celestial life which they had lost; there is no possible way in which that life which has its proper sphere of exercise in heaven with God could be restored but by the gift of God. He is not indeed tied to His sacraments, and He might well, if it pleased Him, bestow the gift of celestial life upon millions whom the waters of the font had never touched. But the gift which He has bestowed upon us, whereby the heavenly life is planted anew in our souls, is Baptism. So also is that heavenly life brought to maturity of strength for its probation by Confirmation. The sevenfold gift of the Spirit is celestial armor whereby we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. This too is a very wonderful gift bestowed by our Lord upon His people through His ministers. And

after Confirmation comes the most marvellous and mysterious gift of all, the Bread of heaven, where-with nourished we are enabled to grow up into everlasting beatitude. This is no other thing than that tree of life which was in the midst of the ancient Eden, and is still in the midst of the celestial paradise of God. It is the Body and Blood of the Lord, of which if the servant of God partake worthily he shall live forever. Besides the *fruit* of the tree of life, there are its *leaves*, which are for the healing of the nations. This is no other thing than the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, of which the prophet spake long centuries ago, in the waters of which a man may wash and be clean as Adam was when he walked unfallen in paradise. There are other gifts of the sacramental life bestowed by our Lord upon His Church when He ascended up on high, as the sacrament of Order for the ministry itself, through which all the treasures of grace are dispensed to the faithful; the sacrament of holy Matrimony for such as are to wed, that they may be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, living holily according to God's laws; and that healing sacrament of Oil, anointing the sick for their raising up, for their comfort in their pains. You see that He did indeed give great gifts unto men when He ascended up on high, even the fulness of the Holy Ghost with all His treasures of grace, enabling us not only to live again to spiritual things, but to start out on that great quest of paradise once more, a better Eldorado than the people of the old world hoped somewhere to find on this great continent of ours

when it was first announced by bold mariners to exist far away to the west of all the world that had been known hitherto. Aye, let men ask us, Why are you so earnest, so enthusiastic in your religion, it does not make your lives easier, it does not free you from the misfortunes which fall so relentlessly upon all mankind. True enough, you reply, but we are concerned with the quest of that ancient paradise which our forefathers lost, and we know that we are surely upon the high road which leads to it, and shall not fail to attain our hope if we do but persevere.

IV. Who would suppose all of this to be true as he beholds the lives of Christians, so little different from those of men who make no profession of following the Lord, as he hearkens to their complainings and their words of fault-finding with the way in which God has ordered their lives. Ours is not a believing age. Scores of those who attend church and listen politely to the preacher, are wont to say in their hearts, He lives in an unreal world, there are no such things as those on which he loves to dwell, they are theological conceits, religious phantasies which devout men have little by little accumulated and accustomed themselves to believe. To be good is to be good, and the sacramental life is a very unimportant detail in true religion. What then will you make of Christ Himself, of the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension into heaven? These cannot be dismissed as unreal fancies also, the evidence for them is too strong and well substantiated. And thus to the one who is really in earnest the cloud of doubt and questioning gradually lifts and all the ex-

quisite story of the Gospel comes home to him with an amazing power of conviction. We were given the inheritance of paradise, but our first parents lost it by transgression. Then came this great One, our Master Christ, conquered the foe, took with Him the spoils of victory, then mounted up to the celestial paradise and entered in, as of right, and as our Head and Chief, there to prepare a place for us, there as our great High Priest to interpellate for us, and pray as our Intercessor, thence to shower down upon us inexhaustible treasures of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

GOD AND MAN

“Canst thou by searching find out God?”—(Job xi. 7.)

A GREAT naturalist upon a certain occasion would study the habits of one of the smallest species of antæ, tiny creatures hardly as long as the diameter of a pin's head. He gathered a few handfuls of sand, of the sort they would live in, and arranging all so that his unconscious prisoners should not escape, introduced a number of the little creatures to their world. They were speedily at home in it, he providing food and such things as they should need within their boundaries. It was strange to see this gray-haired man, of profound learning, spending hours over that ant-dwelling, noting with the most careful accuracy everything that he could discover as to their ways and habits. Why should he do so? He would tell you that it was for science's sake, because all the facts of nature and of creature life are worth recording and studying. Perhaps after a while he would tell you more than that, even that he found the greatest delight in following out into its particulars the life of those tiny creatures in their small

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world of sand. Sometimes he dreamed that little by little, laying hold on this or that evidence of special intelligence and seeking to develop it, he could gradually lift up the ants in the scale of reason, and make them responsive to his solicitude on their behalf. He wondered whether it might not be possible at last to awaken in individuals among them a rational soul, in which they should come to know him in some way as he knew them, and return in a measure his interest. He was not unaware that such a dream was vain, nevertheless those tiny creatures had interested and filled his thoughts amazingly.

I. When once we begin to study nature after this sort it is easy to go on and see in the ants the figure of ourselves and our life upon the earth, as it must be in the eyes of our Creator. For somehow it seems very difficult for us to conceive any adequate sense of proportion between ourselves and God. We are still childish enough to think about God as only an exaggerated man, some great earthly potentate a little magnified; yet not so large as that we have not some proportionate relationship to Him. We do not easily think of ourselves as equally insignificant in relation to Him as the ants are to the savant who keeps them captive that He may study their ways. The lightest touch of his finger would cause each tiny ant to perish, a sweep of his hand would carry all their world and they in it to destruction. Of course we know very well that this comparison does not begin to tell us the truth as to God's greatness and our littleness, but perhaps it helps us to approach the truer conception of our relation to Him. We are all

like little ants, and the world our ant-hill, very busy, very wise after our small kind, fighting, mating, tyrannizing over one another; accomplishing all sorts of marvels, and fancying ourselves very important creatures indeed in our own realm. Yet what an insignificant thing in the universe is our world, what a minute grain of sand! Think of the countless millions of the fixed stars—there is probably no end to their number so far as the human mind can go in reckoning—and every one of them may have its own planetary system even as our sun has, which is but one of their host. Every planet, too, may have its own race of rational creatures, some of them far more developed intellectually than we, as we are fancying the Martians to be, while we are ever on the alert to perceive the signals we like to think they are trying to make in order to enter into communication with us. We dwell with delighted amazement on the possibility of such a thing, even as little children might enthusiastically recount their success in signalling to one another from two tiny mud islands in the little brook which runs at the foot of their father's place. Do not think I am disparaging any effort to gain further knowledge of the facts of creation; only do not let us lose sight of the proportions of things, and think of Mars and our earth as if they were the two only spheres in the universe. As a matter of fact we are upon a small satellite of the sun and that one of countless millions of similar suns, and we are, in comparison of the rest of creation dwelling upon a most insignificant dot of earth in it, and are very likely utterly insignificant as a

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race in comparison of other races of rational creatures which God has made.

II. When we said, *which God has made*, we are led on to think something of Him and what He must be like. Trinity Sunday calls us to dwell then upon the divine One and the manner of His being. No man hath seen God at any time, nevertheless there are some things of which we are sure concerning Him. He is almighty, for that belongs to the very conception of Deity. It means that He does whatsoever pleases Him as He pleases, there can be no hindrance to the fullest expression of the divine omnipotence. The universe is the best evidence that we can have of the divine omnipotence, yet we do not forget that there is far more we cannot see than that we can see in the universe, nor even with the unseen part included does the universe *measure* the almightiness of the Most High. Furthermore He must be all-wise, knowing everything. This too is a fundamental axiomatic fact about God; it could not be otherwise. We have in the orderly arrangement of the universe, the terrific motions of the heavenly bodies, an illustration of the wisdom of God, yet we do not fancy that omniscience is adequately measured by the marvels of wisdom with which the universe is filled. Yet again, God is good. The word God itself implies this, for what constitutes fundamental goodness or badness? Only the will of God. There is evidence enough of the goodness of the Creator in His works, nevertheless we do not believe that there is no higher goodness in the divine life than that of benevolence towards the creatures which

it has called into being. What I mean is that a few moment's thought make it plain to us that God does not require the universe in order to exercise His almightiness, His wisdom, and His goodness; these must have their perfect expression in the divine nature without any need of creation.

(1) The almighty wisdom ever declared itself in itself, producing its own express image, personal like itself. The Catholic belief in the only-begotten and eternal Son of the Father is the logical truth which the human mind naturally reaches when it meditates upon the divine nature.

(2) So too must almighty goodness have ever gone forth in itself with a breath not less infinite than itself. God gives Himself wholly; therefore as the Father Who eternally breathes forth of His love towards the Son is a person, and as the Son Who in His turn also breathes forth that same love is a person, so the love thus breathed between Father and Son cannot be less personal than themselves, and He is the Holy Ghost. This is our faith in the Blessed Trinity, Three Persons in the divine Being, quite distinct from one another in that which is personal, yet all Three fundamentally One in the divine substance. It is a difficult doctrine, I admit, for the human mind to grasp intelligently, but then it is the doctrine concerning the life of the Creator, and could not naturally be easily understood by the creature. We ought not to be surprised that those tiny ants, with all the cleverness of their brains for the conditions of their own life, should be unable to form any very accurate conception of the being of the natural-

ist who pursues the study of their habits, and provides them with the necessities of their existence in their own infinitesimal world.

III. Why it should have pleased the Almighty to call creatures into being, and to make them after such infinite variety of pattern we cannot tell. No doubt we shall know some day in the larger world where things now hidden are made plain. But as one would say, arguing from our own rational standpoint, it was natural enough. We should make things, if we had the power. God willed a joyous universe to come into being. He has not told us of the affairs of our neighbouring planets even. We think that we have found out a great deal about the moon, but what a pitiful contribution to the knowledge of the sidereal heavens. There they are, the giant suns, in their number endless, and each one full of his own mysteries. It surely behoves us to be little in our own eyes when we come before God. Nor may we stop with the thought of the star worlds and the secrets which they hide. The realm of the material is only the foil for the realm of the spiritual. How much better is our mind than our body? What wealth of existence there is in the spiritual regions which lie behind the things of sense. None of us can know that indeed, but we do know by the divine revelation that there are countless hosts of the most glorious spiritual creatures inhabiting those regions, creatures which are so great and lovely that when men have from time to time been permitted to see one or other of them, they have thought that they must be looking upon God. When we take all of this

into account it is not likely that we shall have a very exalted notion of our own importance in this vast creation. Are we relatively even as important as the ants in that box in which the naturalist had placed them that he may study their ways?

IV. Howbeit we are not to be thought of as objects of interest to the divine Persons in the sky that they should study our ways and our doings. God knows perfectly all about the life of every one of His creatures, with all its possibilities. The lightest touch of His finger is not needed even to cause us to perish, only the exercise of His will. Why then should He be concerned with us at all? We do not know why He called us into being, save that it was for His glory and our happiness; but having called us into being He loved us, for we are the work of His hands. If that naturalist had succeeded in creating a colony of those tiny ants, no doubt he would feel the greatest interest in them if not exactly affection for them. But if they should some day develop intelligence enough to recognize him as their master and the author of their being, and to turn to him with grateful eyes and an eager waiting on the manifestation of his will, one can fancy that he would even love them, small and insignificant as they are in comparison of himself. So it has been the good pleasure of God to create us with a nature capable of recognizing and loving Him. It is certain moreover that He desires the love of the human creature, and when that is not given to Him spontaneously He is grieved and seeks in very wonderful ways to win it for Himself. There is no more marvellous thing in

the universe than this, that God should care so much for our love, when one considers how great He is and how insignificant we are.

(1) As if that wise naturalist of this world had found the tiny insects, whose lives he was studying, to set themselves against his plans and purposes for them, choosing courses and modes of living that were plainly hurtful and must be eventually destructive to them, wilfully refusing to do any of those things which he would have them do for their own good; and should suffer them to follow their own courses for a while till they should find out by bitter experience the futility of those courses. Thus did God with the human race after our first parents had turned away from Him by disobedience in the garden. He permitted them to follow their own evil inclinations, yet would not wholly let them go.

(2) At last in their misery, as they stood on the brink of ruin, they lifted up despairing voices to Him, uttering inarticulate cries for mercy, because they knew not what else to do. The wise scientist might in such a case pity the helpless insects and put them back into their former state. With the human race this could not be, for man has a moral nature, and his moral nature was hopelessly corrupted through his transgression. Then the eternal Son, the Second Person of the divine Three, the express image of the Father's Person, stepped down out of His royal throne to take upon Him our human nature that in it He might make atonement for our transgressions by His death, and so bring in a new humanity, through union with which the old humanity

might be restored and raised up to life again. Fancy that great naturalist stooping to the condition of those tiny creatures, those smallest of ants whose lives he was studying, and becoming one of them. That is the incredible mystery of the incarnation. It is not wonderful that our Lord was despised and rejected of men, because He had made Himself of no greater humanity than theirs in the outward parts. The scientist putting off his natural self, and becoming but an ant among the other ants, is dismayed to find that they turn against him, because he affectionately urges them, in his form like their own, to give up their foolish ways and to redeem themselves; they are enraged against him for rebuking their follies and falling upon him they slay him. What if it were his will to die for them! Not less wonderful, a thousand times more so, is the stooping down of the eternal Lord to the littleness of our humanity, even suffering Himself to be slain at the hands of those whom He would redeem. A wise and venerable man shrunken to the littleness of the smallest of ants does not begin to portray the depth of the self-abasing of the Son of God when He took on Himself our humanity. The horror of that generous benefactor of the ants being put to death by his fellow ants whom he was trying to save, does not begin to express the horror of the slaying of the Son of God in human nature by the hands of men.

(3) But that is not all. That wise scientist finding his efforts to help the tiny creatures of his care all in vain, might well resume his wonted manhood, and turn away to seek other philosophic pur-

suits that should better repay his labour. He would toss the little heaps of sand and their insect inhabitants out of the window and devote himself to something else. So might the Lord have well done with our human race, but so He did not do. Confident in the ultimate triumph of His love, He mounts up into heaven to prepare a place for His creatures when they shall be made fit for such a place, and sends down upon them the Third Person of the blessed Three, the Holy Spirit of love to enter into the heart of each sinful and careless one and touch that heart with a desire for better things. Fancy a breath of the pulsing life of heaven itself entering into the being of each insignificant human creature, and kindling there a spark of immortality, which should grow stronger and blaze up and finally become a great unending fire of love and devotion in the soul. This is exactly what the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit is. As if that scientist should patiently take up one by one each of those tiny rebellious ants and reason with it till it should become in some small degree responsive, that he might then begin fitting it, ever more and more as it was able to bear more, with a wisdom above its nature and strength, which should little by little transform it into the possibility of knowing and responding to his solicitude on its behalf. It is the work of the Holy Ghost in the world to carry on in every soul which does not resist His gracious ministrations, a progress in Christ-likeness, until at last the image of the Master may be recognized in the servant. "We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is."

V. Is it not fair thus to represent the work of the divine Trinity for the salvation of our poor sin-stricken human souls? God did not blot us out, as He might well have done—how many of us regard as of any importance the life of this or that tiny insect which annoys us? But He would not do so. Bearing with all our disobedience and impiety, the Father willed that the Son should descend to our littleness, clothing Himself with our humanity, consenting as it were to creep with us upon the face of this insignificant globe of ours, as upon some diminutive ant-hill in an out-of-the-way corner of the universe; not indeed that He might by His example in our conditions purify and better our manner of living, but that He might be put to death by those whom He would save, a willing sacrifice for their sins; and then to send upon them the Holy Ghost so to enter into them and dominate the lives of all who would be moved to accept salvation, as to raise them up from that insignificant life of their lower world, into the realm of spiritual existence, qualifying them for its conditions, in order that when the time should come He might transport them from the temporal things into the eternal, as the friends and chosen followers of the Son Who was made man, in all the wealth and joyousness of everlasting life. Such is the work of the Blessed Trinity for us men and for our salvation.

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DIVES AND LAZARUS

“And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”—(St. Luke xvi. 22, 23.)

IT IS certain that there ought to be no more absorbing question calling for answer in our lives than that of what is to become of us after our death. A poor unhappy creature has grown tired of the weariness of life and has fixed upon the idea that with death will come release from all pains and sorrows, so presently he takes some hurtful drug, or blows out his brains, and goes forth to he knows not what; but certainly not to rest. The thoughtless man, absorbed in this world’s things, is in an instant by some accident hurried out of life, to meet his God. We are wont to say, “After all a sudden death is better than a lingering one; I had rather be taken away in some instantaneous catastrophe than after months of suffering.” You can find a good many people who will tell you that they do not understand the petition in the Litany wherein we pray to be de-

livered from sudden death. Of course people talk so because they do not think about what comes after death, but only of the pain and grief of passing. On the other hand you have the devout believer who has lain on a bed of hopeless illness for months, rejoicing that God spares him still from day to day that he may make a little more complete preparation than he has yet made for that solemn going forth of his soul.

I. Our Lord in this day's Gospel describes in brief yet very pregnant words the life and death of two men. We cannot think of Him adding any dramatic touches which are not warranted by the reality to the narrative, nor can we imagine Him simply making up the tale without knowing whether it truly represented what takes place in the nether world or not. We are certain that all which He tells us is wholly substantiated by the facts; that He only could know, for He alone is divine. We must not forget, of course, that the story of Dives and Lazarus represents the condition of the dead before our Lord had died to redeem the world, before He had descended Himself into hades to turn Abraham's bosom into paradise. Yet there is no reason to think that the principles upon which the divine judgment is passed upon departing souls is in any wise different now from what it was under the Old Testament dispensation; the moral law was not less in force then than it is now, though now there may be new sanctions of it. Therefore we have a right to read in the Gospel for this day the revelation of our Lord concerning the future state of men so far as the types of Dives and Lazarus apply to them.

II. The first thing that is unmistakable in the story—it is called a parable, but one may well believe it to be the true life-tale of two souls—is that there is a hell. We do not like to believe that. I suppose that more than half the Protestant Christians in the world are in their hearts universalists, and a good many who call themselves Catholics are so also, though of course they cannot really be Catholics if they disbelieve in hell. I do not mean to enter into any argument to show the reasonableness and the logical necessity of eternal punishment for the wicked, though that might be done with great cogency; but rather to insist upon the fact that the doctrine of hell as the Catholic Church has ever believed it is a part of the divine revelation. As I have often said to you before, we may not be able to explain to ourselves nor to comprehend satisfactorily everything in the divine revelation. The important point is that we should accept every part of it, just because it is from God, and make the best of it. It is certain that He knows, and that we do not know what the future hides from our view, and it is very absurd for us to refuse to accept it because we say that it does not commend itself to our reason. I do not in the least believe that the way to find out God's truth is to go to study the Bible for ourselves. The Church is not afraid to have her doctrines tested by appeal to Holy Scripture; she has ever made that appeal herself. But she tells her children that they are liable to err in their private interpretation of God's Word, therefore she gives them the great facts of revelation in her doctrinal teachings, and reminds

them that a vast company of the greatest and holiest of her saints ever since the days of the Apostles have recognized the fidelity of her tradition to the text of the inspired Scriptures. It is notorious, however, that where the tradition of the Church is not received, and where men go to gather divine truth as they would say at first hand from the written Word, they cannot escape the doctrine of eternal punishment save by all manner of evasions, and unnatural explanations of the divinely given text. No one who reads the Bible can fail to see that the natural plain meaning of our Lord's words is that there is an everlasting hell of fire for lost souls. It is true that He does not tell us the number of the lost, nor how large a proportion the condemned shall bear to the redeemed. He tells us certainly of but two who are in hell, the one Judas, for of him the Master said, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born," and this Dives of our story to-day, who indeed may not have been an actual personality, though many incline to the belief that he is. The characteristics of hell as taught here and elsewhere in our Lord's words are:

(1) It is *eternal*, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Nor is there any good reason to suppose that the word translated *everlasting*—"these shall go away into everlasting punishment"—does not mean everlasting in the ordinary sense of that word.

(2) It is *hopeless*, for the Lord says distinctly that there is a great gulf fixed between the part of hades in which Lazarus was and that in which Dives

was, and that no one could pass from one part to the other. This must destroy the dream of those who fancy that there is further probation after death for such as have failed here, or whose probation may be thought to have been inadequate here. The Church from the beginning has ever held that there was no probation after death, and our own Prayer Book expressly sets this forth in the office for the Visitation of Prisoners.

(3) The nature of the torment is fiery. We are apt to talk a good deal about *material* fire, though it is not clear what material fire is. Our Lord represents Dives as tormented in flame, and over and over again the Bible speaks of the punishment of hell as being fiery. The lake which burns with fire and brimstone is the language of the Holy Ghost, and it is difficult to conceive of Almighty God using such language if it does not convey the true idea to our minds. Why should He speak of fire, if there be no fire?

III. But to return to those two of whom alone it may be declared with certainty that they are lost in hell, Judas and Dives. Of the former it may be said that even we, with all our mercifulness, could hold that hell was none too bad for him. Such a horrid deed was his, capped with his own suicide, how could he escape the damnation of hell? But what of Dives in the story of this day's Gospel? If he had been guilty of any great and dreadful crime it would seem certain that our Lord should speak of it in some way. As it is the statement of Dives' offense is singularly slight, though perhaps the words imply a good deal

more than appears on the surface. He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. This belonged to his station in life. There does not seem to be any direct condemnation of his expensive clothing, nor yet of his good dinners, but perhaps there is deep signification in that word *every day*. Even wicked King Ahab on certain days wore sackcloth, and every Jew who at all regarded the Law, kept a number of fast days in the year. So you see in the case of Dives his worldly enjoyment and self-indulgence caused him to neglect altogether his duty towards God, disregarding His law. Then when it is said that Lazarus was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, it is made plain to us that Dives also neglected the first principles of devout charity, as much enjoined upon the Jew as upon the Christian. We need not suppose that he grudged the beggar the crumbs which fell from his table. It may indeed be that he thought himself rather bountiful in allowing the servants thus to feed the wretched one at his gate. But he must often have observed the pitiful plight of Lazarus, as he went in and out the gate of his fine house, and he must have perceived with a certain horror the dogs, the pariahs of the town, licking the wretched beggar's sores, and he too helpless to drive them away, but compelled in his misery to submit to that pollution at the tongues of those unclean though doubtless in this case kindly creatures. Had Dives the smallest spark of real compassion in his nature he would have seen to it that some relief was extended to the beggar, some as-

suaging of his misery, other than that he should not starve to death. But apparently he thought it no affair of his. He could not be troubled by the necessities of a wretched creature like Lazarus. His whole life is thus seen to be self-centered. He had been given this world's good things and he was bent on getting all the satisfaction he could out of them. God was forgotten, the poor neighbour was overlooked, self and pleasure were the ends for which Dives lived.

IV. And what shall we say of Lazarus? There is very little told of him, nevertheless that little is very suggestive. He is apparently very patient and uncomplaining. He desires the crumbs from Dives' table, but he does not cry out and importune for anything more. He has learned meekness. He does not express any horror or loathing because of those unclean beasts which add to his unhappy plight, nor does he beseech the servants of Dives to drive them away. He is content with things as God has been pleased to order them for him, and does not complain. One can well believe that in such a heart as his there were frequent thoughts of God, and many prayers. We are not told that, however, we are only told of his misery and led to suppose that he accepted it uncomplainingly, as from his heavenly Father's hand. It is surely a reminder to us that suffering is the greatest service of all. Not the gracious Lord's wonderful works of healing, nor His marvellous preaching, saved the world, but His patiently endured passion, His silent woes upon the cross. So to Lazarus was granted the very vocation of the Master

Himself, to suffer patiently, uncomplainingly, with glad submission to the will of God. It is very noteworthy that in the case both of Dives and Lazarus there is no stress laid upon any action of either of them. Dives sins not so much by what he does as by what he does not do, His neglect of God, his neglect of his neighbour; and Lazarus wins Abraham's bosom not by his good deeds, but by his patient endurance of manifold evil.

V. It is obvious that in the case of those to whom this world means a great deal, both their means and their interests afford opportunity of manifesting devotion to God and love of their neighbour. We may not be rich as Dives, yet perhaps we have much happiness in this present life and find in it a good many things to absorb our attention. So we are in danger of neglecting our duty to God, and also in danger of disregarding our duty to our needy fellow-men. Such people are the ones who are in great peril of going to hell when they die. To be clothed in purple and fine linen and to fare sumptuously every day may mean neither extravagance nor gluttony in the ordinary sense of the term, but it does imply that a great deal of thought and attention are given to the things of this world, and little thought to the things of eternity. There was another rich man of whom we are told in one of the lessons for to-day, the treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, a man of great authority and much responsibility. He, notwithstanding all that he had to look after, found time to take a long carriage journey from Ethiopia to Jerusalem in order to worship God

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in His temple, and he was so intent upon the things of the soul that as he travelled he studied his Bible, and was eagerly desirous of a teacher to instruct him in the meaning of what he read. In another Bible instance we have the Good Samaritan, evidently a man of means and of earthly consequence, stopping on his journey and taking the greatest pains and all needful expense to care for the wounded stranger whom he had found half dead by the roadside. We always fancy ourselves busy people, and very likely we are, with many worldly interests to look after, many personal cares and responsibilities pressing on us. These furnish us with excuse for neglecting God and being absorbed with temporal things; they are our apology for not giving more thought to the welfare of our poor and suffering neighbours. Dives was neither unaware of his duty to God, for he had the teachings of Moses and the prophets wherewith to guide his life, nor was he ignorant of the wretched plight and necessity of Lazarus, for he daily passed him by at his gate, and saw the dogs licking his sores. We know our duty to God well enough, and we are perfectly aware of the needs of many of our poorer neighbours all about us; yet we are too much absorbed in our own affairs, our interests and our ease, either to obey the divine precepts as good Christians, or to devote ourselves to succouring the unfortunates who are at our gates. Therefore we are in no small danger of Dives' fate.

VI. We are much more fond of classing ourselves with Lazarus than with Dives. We are full of pains and troubles, our lives pressed down with

many misfortunes. What is our great desire? To have life made easier for us. We are not content with the beggar to live on the crumbs from the tables of our more prosperous neighbours; we quite resent the idea of being in any way dependent; it is intolerable that we should be subjected to the misery of having our sores licked by the unclean beasts of the street. We have Lazarus' troubles, or we fancy that we have, but we have none of his patience, his meekness, his cheerful acquiescence in his hard lot. So while God has given us the greatest of all vocations, that of suffering along with our Master Christ in the indignities which were put upon Him, and in His bitter passion, we reject this vocation with scorn and indignation because our pride cannot brook such an ignoble calling. Thus do we also miss the priceless opportunity which was Lazarus' and fail to enter with him, when this life is past, into Abraham's bosom.

VII. In spite of all this we come back to the thought that such derelictions as those of Dives are not grievous enough to merit eternal punishment. The melancholy truth is that our Lord says they are so, and He must know. It is not a small thing in His eyes that His creatures to whom the glad tidings of the Gospel have been preached, and who have had brought visibly before them the spectacle of the cross, knowing well enough all that it means, should go on year after year of their life ignoring His service, indifferent to the requirements of His religion, self-satisfied with their loyalty to a standard of ethical virtue which they have set up for themselves, and

with scant thought for the miseries of their neighbours. Such conduct is very grievous in His eyes, for He has given them the measure of this world's good things, which is their portion, in order that they might by means of it glorify Him in self-denials, and cheerful ministrations to their poorer fellows. It is a grievous impiety in the divine eyesight that a man should be absorbed in the things of this world, when he was created, as he must know if he will but think of it, for the things eternal. All of God's gracious purpose for him is thwarted, the death of our Lord upon the cross, the most amazing fact of history, the most stupendous declaration of the divine love, becomes but an incident to him in which he has no part, while the wealth of celestial gifts which the Holy Ghost so freely offers him is brushed aside as something with which he will not be troubled. You will say that the worldly-minded man does not realize these facts, nor understand them so. The point is, however, whether that is a sufficient excuse for his outrageous impiety towards his Maker, his Redeemer, his Sanctifier. If there be adequate reason for his ignorance and thoughtlessness, it is indeed true that God will most graciously overlook his misdoing. But perhaps the story of Dives is told us to remind us that there is often not such good excuse as we like to assume that there is. Dives is a very typical specimen of men of this sort, and our Lord teaches us that there was no pardon in his case. He ought to have known his duty. It may well be doubted whether there is any more hope for most of those who give themselves up to worldly living in these days.

VIII. It needs not that we should be reminded that those who make profession of serving Christ, and yet go on in wilful sin, cannot hope for heaven. The case of Judas is one that all can understand, and perhaps there will be a far larger number of professing Christians in hell than of worldly-minded folk who never uttered a prayer. Nevertheless the solemn warning of this day's Gospel is that all those who neglect duty to God and to their neighbour, and live for self-interest, are in grievous peril of eternal loss, albeit no heinous crime could be laid to their charge, albeit in the world's eyes they were very good fellows, though not professing religion.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE FOLD

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—(St. John x. 11.)

WHEN our Master Christ is pleased to speak of Himself and of His faithful followers, He uses the illustration of the shepherd and his sheep. Accordingly this has ever been a favorite way of representing Him in the Christian world, whether in art or in devotional literature; the good Shepherd always appeals to one, with the lost sheep borne back upon His shoulders with the greatest joy, to the rest of the flock.

It might be thought that in this relation of the shepherd to his sheep our Lord had given us the simplest and least formal conception of the Church possible; yet if we come to read thoroughly the tenth chapter of St. John, from which the Gospel for this day is taken, we shall find that the conception of the good Shepherd and His flock which is there set before us, is a very full one, and one involving many very important truths of our religion.

There are in the chapter two distinct parables, and it is the second of them which we have in the

Gospel for to-day; nevertheless the first of the two is so closely allied to the other that we shall better understand them both by taking them together.

We find then in the Master's account of His people and Himself, first of all, a sheep-fold; that is, an enclosed place with walls and a door through which alone entrance can be had either for sheep or shepherd. Then there is also a door-keeper, a porter, who opens to whom he thinks right, and will not open to others. There is a shepherd spoken of who is not the great Shepherd Himself, but one who represents Him and is recognized by the sheep as having His authority. This shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out to pasture; he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. There is the stranger, too, whom they will not follow, but will flee from him; and there are thieves and robbers, an hireling who flees when he sees the wolf coming, and there is that dreaded wolf himself who catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. It is all full of very significant imagery, this tale of the good Shepherd and His sheep. Furthermore, He declares to us that there are other sheep of His outside the fold, which must be brought in, so that at last there shall be but one fold and one Shepherd.

I. We are hearing in these days the passionate outcries of men against the divisions of the Christian world. What could be more harmful to Christ's cause, they say, than the multiplicity of sects and denominations, what more wasteful of energy and resources? I suppose that all true believers are praying for the unity of Christendom, feeling the shame

of our unhappy divisions ; yet the passionate outcries of which I have spoken proceed largely from a few in our own Church, and some in the Protestant bodies about us, who resent what they call the exclusiveness of the Episcopal Church, with its insistence that only the ministry which it recognizes can be acknowledged the true ministry of our Lord Christ. It is quite the fashion to ignore all the rest of the Catholic world, the two hundred and twenty millions of Roman Catholics, the one hundred millions of Greeks and Orientals ; ecumenical gatherings as they are called, and our common Christianity, seem almost always to regard these three-fifths of the Christian world as a negligible factor in all our talk of reunion. It is quietly assumed that we are in our Communion properly associated with the Protestant bodies, and that we are most perverse and bigoted because we hold ourselves aloof from them in so many ways. Even bishops of the Church will tell us gravely that our Church has much more in common with the Protestant world than with Roman Catholics. Such persons find it convenient to ignore the existence of the millions of Oriental and Russian Christians, who are just as hostile to the papal pretensions as we are, yet certainly have nothing in common with Protestantism as a system. So we are asked to forget that there are any other Christian bodies save the various denominations of Protestantism around us, and our own Church, and to contemplate the unlovely prospect of a small Communion like our own holding aloof from the great and active Christian Churches of this country, while saying to

them, You have no ministry that we can recognize, and no sacraments, save Baptism and Matrimony, that we can acknowledge.

II. Perhaps under these circumstances it may be profitable for us to look back to the teaching of our Master Christ about His Church as He designed it to be, under the figure of the sheep in the sheep-fold.

(1) One cannot but note primarily how completely He centres everything in Himself. He alone is the source and fountain of life and of authority to His sheep. "All that ever came before me," He says, "are thieves and robbers," by which He means that all who came claiming authority independently of Himself, in any sort of rivalry to Him, before Him in their assertion of themselves. He asserts, you perceive at once, the exclusiveness of His religion. One would say that such language was the height of bigotry and intolerance, were it from any other lips but His. As it is there are found many in our day who insist that the divine religion cannot be restricted to Christianity, that the Gospel can claim no monopoly of truth and right worship. The great world religions have many points which we must respect, and they are to be reckoned as companion faiths to the Christian system, from which indeed that system perhaps learned many things, and might learn more. We, in our Lord's Church, know nothing of this sort of thing, nor tolerate it for a moment. Whatever glimmerings of truth there be in the old world religions, they are survivals of the primitive revelation which God gave to our first parents; but as a sys-

tem there can be but one religion acceptable to God, that of which our Master Christ is the centre and keystone. The old Jewish system is not in conflict with this, but is a part of it, the divine religion in its embryo form, waiting for the coming of the Lord from heaven to give it the touch of vitality. Furthermore, the same principle has application in reference to many systems which reckon themselves Christian among us to-day. The Master tolerates no religion which makes Him not the whole and all-important factor in it. "I am the door," He says. "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." No system which minimizes either His divinity or His atoning death can be recognized as a true religion; these are fundamental elements in the system which He here declares to be His. It is what is popularly known as *evangelical* religion, a religion which insists upon the divinity of our Lord as all important, and upon His death on the cross for our salvation. There is no Gospel faith if these two, or either of them, be omitted. And you will perceive that in these two cardinal doctrines you have the nucleus of the whole creed; which is that the Son of God came down from heaven and took our human nature in order that He might die for us, and that by His death all grace and blessing are supplied to His sheep for their redemption.

(2) In the second place, it is evident enough that our Master thus establishing everything in Himself, also willed that there should be the earthly min-

ister to act as His representative, the under shepherd tending the flock. It is not hard to collect from this chapter concerning the good Shepherd a very full and noble conception of the Christian ministry. The faithful shepherds of the Master's flock enter by the door, and our Lord adds, "I am the door"; that is, they can only come into office in His Church as His representatives; there is no other authority to minister save that which comes directly from Him. The Church is thought to be very exclusive in her ministry, and so she is, because He has insisted upon that. The only ones of whom we know to whom He gave authority to succeed Him in shepherding the sheep were the holy Apostles. To them He said, "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you." For that reason the Church has always insisted that no ministry can be recognized save that which is clearly derived from the Apostles, through channels of communication originated by them. We are often found fault with for insisting upon what is called the Apostolic Succession of the ministry; but must we not insist upon it when we know of no other to whom the Master gave authority to minister but to the Apostles? He adds that to this sort of shepherd, "the porter openeth." The porter is recognized at once as the Holy Ghost, and He opens the door to the true minister of Christ to exercise his functions, by ordination. Then what an exquisite picture the Lord draws for us of the true priest shepherding the flock. "The sheep hear his voice," they recognize the right to speak, for who should presume to stand in the pulpit to teach Christ's sheep the way of life, save those

whom He has authorized and sanctified to speak for Him? "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." It is the figure of the true pastor knowing his sheep in their individual lives. It is, alas! true in the state of discipline which we recognize and tolerate in the Anglican Communion that the priest is too often not allowed to know the lives, the hidden heavenly names of his people, unless they are pleased to let him know them. He may open his confessional often, and plead with his hearers to come and suffer him to know them individually, but he pleads in vain if they decline to make use of that sacrament. Of what avail is the parochial call, or the interview in the study to help people's souls? The blight of life is sin. People's troubles are but of this life, exaggerated often to an importance that they do not possess, and the noblest office of the pastor seems in their eyes to be the sympathizer with them in those troubles, and the helper to relieve them. Down beneath all that surface life there is the hidden existence of the soul which only God can know, save as the soul is pleased to reveal it to any other. This is the all-important life. To minister to this the priest exists as the pastor of souls, and were it not for this life it is difficult to see why the clergy should be thought of as shepherds at all. Any one might sympathize with troubles, any one might minister earthly relief; but to supply spiritual sustenance for the true being of Christ's sheep, this is a function calling for a clergy authorized to know and to deal with the secrets of the soul. The faithful shepherd calleth his own sheep by name, he knows their inner

spiritual being through the confessional—alas, how many there are who will not permit him so to know them! He leadeth them out to pasture, for that is his prerogative too, to spread God's board for them with supersubstantial food. It is like that strange miracle of the loaves, only much more mysterious than that—did not the Lord say that His followers should do greater works than He had Himself done among them, after He had gone to the Father? For the priests of the Church, the pastors of the flock, take bread and wine, and by the mystic words and acts enjoined, they transmute these into the very Flesh and Blood of the Lord. So the sheep may go in and out and find pasture, going into the Lord's dining-room early in the morning to partake of the celestial food, and then out into the world life they have here to live, to find out the power and strength of that food even as the patient sheep in chewing the cud draws out the fulness of its nourishment. The true shepherd goeth ever before the flock. So should the priest be in all things an example of devout living to his people. He may have great cause to bewail his short-comings in this regard, nevertheless the ideal is a noble and inspiring one.

(3) In the third place concerning the Master's sheep-fold, it is founded in order that His sheep may have life. He speaks of the thief, who comes but to steal, and to kill and to destroy, but the Lord nourishes His sheep not to put them to death, but that they may have life and have it abundantly. Man inevitably looks forward to death. This makes our present existence to have always an element of

sombreness in it. For although when one gets old, or has met with any grievous ills, he longs to die, in order, as he hopes, to find relief from his burdens and a resting place, he does so because the sombreness has already come to him, the sunshine of existence has gone. No matter how joyous the days of our earthly being may seem, we cannot forget their transitoriness, we must lament it. But the promise of the Master's religion is life and that evermore abundant, an exuberance of vitality that never wanes. Men get to look upon their religion as something to solace life's woes, to comfort one in one's sorrows, but not as a gift of life. But it is to give life that the Church exists; to impart to the infant at the font a germ of most glorious immortality, to strengthen this immortality with the supernatural energy of the Holy Ghost in Confirmation, to repair all its waste in Penance, to develop it ever more and more in Holy Communion. For this the Church exists. Our Christian life in the fold of God is meant to be a true life, a life within a life, and the fosterers of this heavenly life are the pastors of the flock, God's ministers. "And I give unto them eternal life," says the Master; "and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

II. We ought not to forget that all the great gifts of God to us involve corresponding obligations on our part. The sheep here only furnish an illustration for the lives of believers in the Church, for

of course the brute creature has no moral free-agency.

(1) God's sheep must always give heed to show themselves loyal to the Master and to His teachings as given them in His Church. They are to hear the voice of the shepherd, and to follow the teaching which he gives them. And here is to be noted one of the characteristic features of the Church. For though the individual teacher may have ever so many gifts, he is not permitted to teach anything from the pulpit save that doctrine which the Church puts into his mouth in her formularies as interpreted by the ancient tradition which has come down from the Apostles. Individual preachers in the Church may indeed prove unfaithful, and preach for doctrines of Christ their own imaginations, nevertheless, the sheep have always the appeal to the plain language of Creed and Prayer Book, of Liturgy and the ancient belief of the universal Church, so that they are not left in their following of their clergy to the individual vagaries of each pastor. Moreover they are to flee from strangers. Why from strangers? Because in Christ's religion all novelties must be wrong. The truth came down to the Church from above, and it is unchangeable. It cannot be improved upon, or made over to suit the changing opinions of men. Whatsoever is strange is sure to be hostile to the old faith, therefore wise sheep flee from strangers.

(2) They must also take heed to live in personal touch with the Master Christ. It is the glory of the sacramental system of the Church that it brings men into direct contact with our Lord, bridg-

ing the chasm between the divine and the human, making nought of the infinite distance which separates the creature from the Creator. Would you go close to Calvary, and look upon the crucified Master pleading for the pardon of your sins? Come here at Mass time, and follow until the holy Host is broken, and lifted up, and you shall find yourself on the very hill of Calvary itself, viewing the mystery of mysteries, the death of the Lord. Would you bathe in His precious Blood, to wash away all your sin? Come here and enter the confessional, tell simply the story of your guilt, and you shall in very truth be washed clean in that holy stream. Would you eat of His Flesh and drink of His Blood? This, too, you can do in very reality, not in figure or symbol, or mystic phantasy, but verily and indeed. "I know my sheep and am known of mine."

III. It is not to be forgotten that there are perils for the sheep, though they be in the fold. The Master does not minimize these.

(1) There are thieves and robbers, all manner of false teachers and systems which will draw away Christ's sheep from Him. They come but for to steal first, but after that to kill, and finally to destroy in hell. But no thief can prevail unless the sheep be ready to hearken to his voice, and to permit him to steal them away out of the fold.

(2) There are hirelings. It is unhappily true that there are found unworthy pastors in God's Church, who seek their own interests and not the welfare of the flock. But such is the wonderful

provision of His love that He has made His grace effective through His sacraments wherever they be duly administered, and the impious priest, though he be as black-hearted as Judas himself, bestows upon his people the true means of grace, while he is damning his own soul by his unfaithfulness to the Master.

(3) The wolf of which our Lord speaks is the devil, and it remains sadly true that through neglectful shepherding he too often catches and scatters the sheep. Yet we must not forget that although the penalty is to be a sore one for neglectful and hireling shepherds at the last day, God has not left His people like the helpless sheep before the wolf, at Satan's mercy. He cannot hurt any soul who will not hearken to his suggestions. It is always true that if we resist the devil he will flee from us.

IV. Very beautiful and assuring is the promise that there are other sheep outside the fold of the Church whom our Lord claims as His own, and that these, in His own good time, He will bring, so that at the last there shall be but one fold, or one flock, and one Shepherd. It is as if He had said, there will be devout souls found outside the Church, but it is not the part of believers on that account to seek to break down the walls of the sheep-fold, or to leave the doors open that everyone may walk in who will, however unqualified. They are not now counted in, they must be brought in. Our Lord has been pleased to avail Himself of the services of His people for the saving of souls, through missionary labours. But the effort must always be to bring them into the one

fold. There is no way of salvation revealed to us but the way of the Catholic Church, therefore the Church must always be a proselytizing organization. But is not He, our Master, a good Shepherd to have cared so much for His sheep as to give His life for them, and then to found His Church as their safe fold, giving them in His priests, shepherds ordained to represent Him and to do all His will, who shall teach His sheep, and feed them in good pastures, even calling them by name as their guides to eternal life.

THE UNITY OF LOVE

"Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard, even unto Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing. Like as the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the hill of Sion. For there the Lord promised His blessing, and life for evermore." —(Ps. cxxxiii.)

IN THE very beginning of his creation it is said of the human creature by the Almighty, "It is not good that man should be alone." For He meant us to be social creatures. We are often selfish and do not strive to do our part in the life of the community. We choose to live alone so far as it suits our own convenience, we do not recognize the obligations, and so we do not appreciate the privileges of the human brotherhood. Nevertheless the best voice of humanity has always condemned this. The hermit may retire from the world's bustle and the world's sin in order to give himself up to heavenly studies, and to deeds of penitence, but he is an exception. If he were not an exception, it would be an unhappy thing for the world. It is certain that our Maker designed us to be social creatures. And

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thus it comes to pass that the truest joys we have in this world, the only experiences which afford anything approximating real happiness, are our friendships and our loves. What is purer and finer of earthly things than the affection which binds together the members of a family, where peace and harmony reign; parents devoted to their children, and children dearly loving their parents; brothers and sisters bound together in tenderest relationship? You may say that one rarely sees this, and perhaps that may be true, nevertheless we all recognize the beauty of it when we do see it. Yet more tender and most wonderful is the bond of love which more and more cements the marriage union when husband and wife are happily mated in the Lord. Even our friendships become most precious things to us, often superseding the old family ties of blood, which by unhappy circumstances have been severed. One comes to feel that one's friendships and loves are so much to one that it is impossible that death can terminate them, and yet, if we understand rightly our Lord's words, the closest of all earthly bonds, that of wedlock, is severed by death. And this is a great difficulty to many people. It is incredible, they say, that the ties of affection which are so much to us here, which indeed are everything to us that is worth while upon earth, are to be nothing to us in heaven, if we attain to that blessed land. We go further, and cry out passionately when the loved one has been snatched away, that if we cannot have that loved one for our own again in the world beyond, we do not want that world; heaven could not be heaven without

the beloved. That feeling is natural enough, because we really have no conception of heaven and the manner of its life. How could a mother be happy in heaven, we say, if she knew that her idolized son was lost in hell?

I. It seems to me that the psalmist in this beautiful poem which we have for our text guides our thoughts very persuasively into another channel, and helps us to a truer conception of life, and love and heaven. He extols unity among brethren. It is a good and joyful thing for brethren to dwell together in unity. But at once we find ourselves asking of what sort this unity is of which he speaks.

(1) It cannot be that of mere love as we know it here in the natural life, for in the first place, that is such a fickle and unreasoning thing. Love is very often an infatuation, I mean as it develops between those who are not bound together by natural ties. The family love, on the other hand, that of parents for children, children for their parents and for one another, is very largely instinctive. We do not in most cases need any injunction to love our parents; and as a rule in this world, brothers and sisters love one another; when they do not, we feel that the case is abnormal, proving that it is the exception and not the rule. It is plain that the psalmist is alluding to some bond of unity which is to bring together those not naturally or instinctively fond of one another. Nor is there reason to think that he has in mind the sexual love, which is often a blind, unreasoning passion. There can be no doubt that he is thinking primarily of the fraternal affection which ought to unite

the Jewish people, not merely because they were one nation, but because of their religion, and the singular favour which they enjoyed as the people of God. For the figures which he uses to illustrate that unity are those of the precious ointment wherewith Aaron the high-priest was anointed, and the dew from Mount Hermon which refreshed and watered Mount Sion.

(2) We know very well that the psalmist's words were spoken by the Holy Ghost quite as literally and quite as fully of the spiritual Israel, the Christian people, and of their union in Christ, as of the ancient Israel united in the worship of the temple. It is not fanciful to interpret the psalm as referring to the unity which should exist among the people of God in these days; to perceive that it expatiates upon the goodness and joyfulness of fraternal love among Christians, which ought to be their great bond of union. And inasmuch as we believe that every true follower of Christ is united personally to Him, incorporated into His very being, and sharing in His life, it is manifest that some sort of *outward* unity ought to be found as the result of this. Now I do not say that there may not be a genuine inward unity of all Christian people, no matter what the denomination of their Christianity, a unity resulting from their union as individuals with Christ our Lord, but it is plain that the psalmist has something more than that in mind in the text. For his illustrations are striking and very descriptive ones.

II. It is like the precious ointment wherewith Aaron was consecrated to his sacred office as the high

priest, and indeed, as the fountain of the Israelitish priesthood.

(1) Why should the Holy Ghost have led the psalmist to use so singular an illustration as this? The commentators do not find it hard to read its spiritual interpretation. The sacred ointment, which signified the divine consecration and appointment with celestial authority, ran down upon Aaron's beard, the symbol of manly dignity and glory, as did the grace of the Israelitish priesthood descend through Aaron upon his sons and his sons' sons, the whole family of his descendants, for the seed of Aaron alone might exercise the office of the priesthood. To the end of the days of the Jewish sanctuary, that is, until Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army under Titus in the year 70 of our Lord, no one was allowed to execute the priest's office but the children of Aaron. The consecration bestowed on him from on high had flowed down upon his family for 1500 years, giving them their authority to sacrifice at the altar of the temple, and to enter into the holy place to burn incense there.

(2) But again, the precious ointment descended not only upon Aaron's beard, but went down also unto the holy robes wherein he was arrayed. It "went down to the skirts of his clothing," our Psalter version says; more literally it is, "to the fringe of his raiment," which properly refers to the opening or collar about the neck. But the important point of the description seems to be that the sacred unction overflowed from the head of Aaron, not only to his beard, but even upon his sacred vestments, the robes

of divine appointment wherein he ministered. We may reasonably see in these robes a figure of the order of the Levites, the ministers of the Israelitish sanctuary, just as we understand the beard of Aaron to be the symbol of the priesthood of the Old Law. The point thus accented is that all the authority and dignity of the ancient ministry of priests and Levites descended from Aaron alone, upon whom the anointing oil was poured, as it were, by God Himself.

(3) The ordinances of the Israelitish Church were not the true things of God, they were but the figures of the true, full of efficacy for the time of their institution, but destined to give place to larger and more heavenly things so soon as our Lord Christ should come. And in the inspired illustration of the ancient ministry which represents it as Aaron's head, beard, and raiment, sanctified by the abundantly outpoured ointment, we have also the prophecy of the ministry of the Catholic Church, the bishops who succeed our Lord Christ through His Apostles in the government of that Church, and on whom the fulness of the Holy Ghost's anointing for the work of the ministry is poured, as the ointment upon Aaron's head; the priests upon whom the heavenly grace of the sacerdotal office comes from the bishops, as the hairs of Aaron's beard were wet with the precious oil of his anointing; and the deacons, who have their share likewise in the divine consecration, though they be but ministers in the sanctuary as the Levites of old; for the sacred unction reaches to them also through their ordination by the bishops, as the fringe of Aaron's robe partook in the overflow of that anointing.

(4) It is not fanciful to hold that in the spiritual unity which the Holy Ghost foretells for the larger Israel there is to be found the counterpart of the divinely bestowed unction of the Aaronic priesthood. One cannot understand the use of this illustration by the psalmist unless it has an application to the Apostolic ministry as fundamental to the true conception of fraternal unity among Christians. For if it were only an affection of heart and mind without outward token and divine seal, there could be no satisfactory explanation given of this striking allusion to the precious ointment poured upon the head of Aaron, which ran down unto his beard, and went even to the fringe of his clothing. Why should it be said that the unity in which it is good for brethren to dwell is like this overflowing of the divine ointment, unless the Christian ministry, which the Aaronic ministry prefigured, has a definite part to play in making that unity a reality? Nor can one find an explanation of the psalmist's illustration which has plausibility, save that which identifies it with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, whose authority comes down from on high, through the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and is dispensed by the bishops, who entrust their sacerdotal functions to the priesthood, and the work of ministering in the sanctuary to the deacons.

(5) If the believers in Christ would dwell together in that fraternal unity, which the Holy Ghost here glorifies, they are to do so in the Church, through the ministrations of that hierarchy which received its anointing from God. The Church is

constituted by God a spiritual society, a home or family, if you please, in which the servants of Christ live as brethren, or are enabled so to live if they preserve the spirit of their Master. It is into this society, this outward though spiritual organization of the Catholic Church, that we are to seek to draw those who are desirous of fraternal unity in Christ, or who would desire such fraternal unity if they knew of it and how it was to be attained.

III. But the psalmist supplies us with a second illustration of what we are to look for in the divine conception of unity, an illustration no less remarkable and significant than that of the precious ointment of the Aaronic priesthood. He says, "like as the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the hill of Sion." This Hermon is a very lofty mountain, always snow-capped, and having three peaks, which is at the northern border of the Holy Land. The name "Hermon" signifies isolation or separation. And we cannot but see in it, used as an illustration, an allusion to God Himself, the high and lofty One. Hermon's snowy cap tells of the all-pure divine life, and the three peaks cause us to think of the Trinity. Hermon's cold condenses the hot air which rises from the Jordan valley, and sends it down in refreshing dew upon the slopes of Sion far below; slopes which otherwise were parched and barren, but by that gracious dew of Hermon are kept green and fertile. Is it not a beautiful picture of the operation of the grace of the Holy Ghost descending as the refreshing dew and showers upon the congregation of the faithful, aye, upon dry and barren souls, causing them

to flower and bear fruit abundantly? In the illustration the psalmist carries us on to the Christian Church at once, for the Holy Ghost was not thus outpoured upon the Jews. It is one of the very cardinal doctrines of the Church that we can do nothing good of ourselves, but only through the grace, that is the *supernatural* help of God. It is one of the most widespread and deeply-rooted heresies of the day that we are able in our own strength, by the force of the will enlightened by our natural understanding, to live upright and worthy lives. This heresy in old times was called Pelagianism, from its most ardent expounder, and it has many followers still. It is flattering to man's self-love to feel that he does not need heaven's help to do right, that his conscience and will are quite sufficient; therefore prayer is needless, and sacraments but useless forms. We require no redemption, the cross is a magnificent manifestation of heroism, but not needed for man's salvation. Strong, self-sufficient human nature resents the notion of being compelled to sue for help from heaven to enable it to live according to its ideals, as if well developed, full grown men were to assume the role of little children and plead for a nurse to cherish them, to bear them along the way of life to the celestial country. Yet that is our religion. We could never attain to heaven but by the cross of Calvary; we can do no good deed save by divine grace; we cannot become perfect without faithful and systematic use of the sacraments. Sion will remain a desert if not watered by the dews of Hermon. If it be a good and joyful thing for brethren to dwell

together in unity, as the psalmist declares, then it is our duty to seek to promote that fraternal unity, by drawing into the bonds of the grace of Christ all those who love Him and would be His followers. For it is not reasonable that the Holy Ghost should use this illustration of the watering of the slopes of Sion by the dew of Hermon, unless there were some reality corresponding to it in the true notion of Christian unity. Through the grace ministered in the Church by the sacraments, men are so supernaturally joined to our Lord Christ that they are made one with Him, and thus united in the most intimate fashion with one another. For every sacrament intended for the use of believers generally has its part in the unifying of the Body of Christ. Baptism incorporates us into Him, making us His true members. Confirmation fills us with supernatural strength to rise to our privileges and opportunities as members, enabling us even to draw nigh to partake of and to assimilate the heavenly food of His most precious Body and Blood. By that most precious Body and Blood, worthily received, and that can only be by the help of the Holy Ghost, we are made one body with Him, so that He dwells in us and we in Him. Then by Penance we are restored and brought back after the falls which separate us from Him. Being washed through the absolutions received after our confessions, we are once more reunited to Him. It is not hard to understand that when the many members of the Body are truly united to that one Body, they become all of them members one of another. And that membership, you perceive

is brought about by the supernatural help of God which we call grace, typified by the dew of Hermon which fell upon the hill of Sion. It were not enough indeed to belong merely to the outward organization of the Church, though that is necessary in order that we may receive the divine grace. But when in addition to our outward membership there is added the sacramental life, in actual contact with our Lord, a new relationship is established among His members which infinitely surpasses all the bonds of this world's affection.

IV. The psalmist concludes his poem thus: "There the Lord promised His blessing and life for evermore." Where is the place of which he says *there*? Evidently it is Sion. Sion in its largest and truest sense is the Christian Church. It is in her, for those who share in her membership, that the Lord promises His blessing. Do not let us ever fancy that there can be such a thing as unattached Christianity, that there can be membership in Christ without membership in His Body the Church. It is true that poor Esau cried piteously to his father after Jacob had secured the blessing which was rightfully his, though Esau thought to claim it for himself, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father," and he did receive a blessing. Yet one not in any wise to be compared with that of Jacob. There are many natural blessings which God bestows very lavishly upon His children though they know not the ways of the Church, and have not found out her sacramental privileges, but these are not to be compared with the honour and

glory bestowed upon the children of the Church. There the Lord promised His blessing. There, too, He promised life for evermore. We believe that no human creature can pass out of existence; life in that sense is everlasting, even though it be in hell. Yet everlasting life in its specific sense means the supernatural life into which one is admitted by Baptism, and wherein we grow by sacramental grace. It is a life which reaches its maturity only when the things of this present world pass away and the soul goes forth into the unexplored country beyond the grave. It is for this life that the Church exists, that her children may grow up into it by their union with our Lord Christ. When this celestial life has shaken itself free of the present trammels of our earth, then the true nature of enduring love is manifested. All that is in Christ is lovely, whatsoever is not in Him is not lovely, cannot be so indeed. All the old relationships of this world shall then be found to have given place to relationships in Him, all the friendships of the present shall have been superseded by the friendships which grow out of the common life in Him. They are no more than the parts which players take upon the stage, very real indeed to true artists while the play is going on, but nothing at all after it is finished. We cannot understand it now, and yet there are in some sense earthly parallels, as when a young wife for loyalty to her husband and for love of him gives up father, mother, all her relations it may be, because they hate and seek to injure her beloved. The wedded love has supplanted the old family love, and when they conflict the

wedded love must prevail. So for the faithful the love of Christ our Lord shall so become the one all-absorbing affection that nothing that is not in Him can longer be attractive in their eyes. Thus it comes to pass that that strange saying of our Lord is fulfilled, "There is no man that hath left house, or brother, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions: and in the world to come eternal life." I suppose that most of the persecution arises in many cases from the wrench of taking up the new relationships in Christ which so often involve the surrender of the old, because they are not in Christ; yet, when the eternal life shall be entered upon then His true servants shall not mourn for the ones who were most dear here, but could not go there because they were not true to Christ our Lord. They shall not even be remembered forasmuch as it is said that God shall wipe away all tears.

UNABLE TO DO WHAT WE WOULD

“For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and those are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”—(Gal. v. 17.)

HOW hard it is for most men to learn that they cannot do the things they would! The prodigal is sure that he is going to find the satisfying of his heart's desire in riotous living. He no sooner comes of age than he gathers all together and takes his journey into a far country, to live there in the most unrestrained indulgence of his natural inclinations. He may not spend all. His fortune may be large enough to withstand all the drain upon it, so that he never, as the poor fellow in the parable, comes to want, nevertheless he does not find the satisfaction he craved. There is something within him that is not slain by all his surrender to the lusts of the flesh, something which demands higher and better things than this world can supply, yet he cannot attain to it. He has his ideal of perfect satisfaction, he dreams of what he would do, and yet he finds that he cannot do the things that he would. / Another starts out in life poor; he has to make his own way

in the world; he dreams large dreams of wealth and fortune. Why should not he succeed in becoming rich? Others have done so, and they are no better men than he. And if one could be rich, overflowing rich, he must be happy. Money will do anything and everything in this world, they say. After long years of labour his dream is realized. He is many times a millionaire. The world envies him. He can do what he will now. Does he think so? Perhaps his is an unhappy home, there are children who break parents' hearts. Or, perhaps, it is a solitary home with no children to brighten it. Or, it may be, as I was told of a certain millionaire who drove past me the other day, and who looked like anything but a happy man, he has had to undergo more surgical operations than any man in the state, and he probably never has a moment free from pain. He cannot do things that he would. I have a neighbour who is gifted above the common lot of mortals; he is clever, a genius indeed in his line. He is possessed of a boundless ambition to win world-wide fame, to have his name a familiar word in all parts of the civilized globe. He has at last attained his goal. He is famous, he is rightly welcomed among the very greatest of his day. Is he content? Alas, no! He has but advanced far enough to realize that there are yet undiscovered worlds beyond his present ken more marvellous than any he has yet come to know, and he yearns and thirsts for a knowledge of them also. Yet this he cannot attain to. The secret of those greater facts always eludes him. He cannot do the things he would.

I. The Apostle in our text does not seem to be speaking of the matter in quite so extended a fashion. He is speaking especially of the conflict in human life between the spirit and the flesh. He is assuming that man has a spiritual nature, and therefore must crave the spiritual things. Yet in his yearning after them he is perpetually hindered and held down by "the flesh." "The flesh," he says, "lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." It is a good thing to bring home to our minds that we have a spiritual part in our nature, something much bigger and finer than the creature life which we find all about us. Of course the Apostle is speaking especially to Christians. We all here are Christians; I have a right to assume that. But what do we mean when we say that we are Christians? We mean that we have been touched from on high by the divine Spirit, at the time of our Baptism. There was then a pouring out upon us of the breath of heaven, a certain divine quality which brought us into touch with celestial things and so set them before us as the only real things, the things which alone are worth striving after. I do not mean to say that there is not some measure of the divine Spirit resting upon every man, by the very fact that he is man, and not a brute. The Church has always believed in prevenient grace, that is, grace which draws men to God and salvation before they have received the full gift of the Holy Ghost in Baptism. The Church has always taught that man is made in the image of God, and although that image has been sadly defaced by sin, it has

never been obliterated. There is still the divine in our soul apart from, anterior to, the gift of Baptism. And because there is in all men this divine quality, there must be the conflict in life between the higher nature and the lower. For no one will deny that we have a lower nature, a brutal and sensuous part which is very far removed from the divine in quality.

(1) Men who do not give themselves up wholly to their merely sensuous part cannot forget that there is something nobler in them than the earthly life can satisfy. They long for and yearn after spiritual ideals, but they confess that they cannot reach them to any degree which contents them. They confess that they cannot do the things that they would.

(2) How much more is all of this true of the regenerate, of those who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is true of course that there are many, unhappily, who have never availed themselves of the privileges of that gift, in whose lives the wealth of spiritual power lies dormant. But where there is the religious instinct, the constant effort to be true to the gift of the Holy Ghost which we know to have been imparted to us, how grievous a thing it becomes that we are still held down and hindered at every point in our efforts to live worthily, by the sensuous nature which still clings to us.

(3) We may not ignore this fact of the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh in the lives of all those who are trying to serve God, as I trust that you and I are. It is not diffi-

cult to admit the fact; we are all painfully aware that our efforts to live devout and Christ-like lives meet with the most violent and persistent opposition not from foes without, but from our own sinful nature within. The contention is so sharp between the flesh and the spirit within us that we cannot do the things that we would.

II. One may say, I can understand that this state of affairs may well exist in the case of those who have not yet come under the influence of God's grace. The heathen, the unregenerate, and such as had never begun to live loyally to their baptismal profession, these might be supposed to be powerless to resist Satan when he puts forth his might against them. But what does sacramental grace amount to if those who have received the Holy Ghost, and are daily availing themselves of their Christian privileges, are likewise unable to do the good things their higher nature approves and seeks after? Yet, further, it may be asked, if the text refers to the heathen and the unbaptized, how can God bring them into judgment at the last day seeing that they are unable, for lack of the gift of the Holy Ghost, to do the things that they would? As for the latter question, it is sufficiently answered by St. Paul in writing to the Romans, for he reminds those to whom he writes that the heathen have God's law written in their conscience, and to every man grace enough is given outside the Church to live obediently to conscience. Of those who have not the divine revelation, much less is required than of Christians, but no man is free from the law of moral responsibility according

to the light that has been given him, and every man has been supplied by the Holy Ghost with grace enough to live obediently to that law. When, however, we come to speak of believers, and those who have received the fulness of the Holy Ghost, we find that it is true in a very real sense that they cannot do the things that they would because the power of the flesh is still so strong within them. It is a painful truth of our spiritual experience that regeneration and the other gifts of the Holy Ghost do not eradicate from our nature the propensity to sin. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, remain in us in greater or less potency until our dying day. God has allowed it to be so for our probation, in order that by resisting these lusts we may give proof of the loyalty of our life.

III. But the Apostle seems to say that we are not able to conquer our sinful nature, or not entirely so, for we cannot do the things that we would. Does not this argue some deficiency in the supply of the divine grace? Rather it argues that we are not earnest and loyal enough to avail ourselves of all the wealth of that grace. Let us see just how the matter stands practically.

(1) The earnest believer never would lose the sense of the divine presence. He would live always in the consciousness of the celestial things. The atmosphere of sense would have no power to hide from him the eternal glories, prayer would be such a delight that it would become second nature to him, he would go through life ever drinking in fresh draughts of the divine goodness, even as his lungs

spontaneously draw in the sweet breath of earthly existence. One might have to tear one's self away from the worship going on continually in the house of God, for the pressure of this world's duties would not suffer him to stay there all the day, but at least when he had opportunity of worship he would ever hasten to the Church, and while there, no wandering thought would ever distract, no worldly matter draw off his attention from things spiritual, even for a moment. Should not you like to have such fervor of devotion as that? I am sure that I should; yet, who is there that ever reaches such a pinnacle of spirituality as it involves? We cannot do the things that we would because we are still so earthy.

(2) How beautiful a thing it would be if one never grew weary of unselfish deeds. We see people whom we think to be of that sort once in awhile, some gentle sister of mercy, or some mother who has long given up her whole life to minister to her family, a family which very likely is ungrateful and not appreciative. One wishes that one could imitate even in some small degree such unwearied unselfishness. Even so, I suppose that kind sister or patient mother would tell us that she often grew weary of the ceaseless demands made upon her, and felt that she could not do one thing more. You and I weary much more easily than that. We do one or two small deeds of mercy, and then we are sure that we have done our share, that we really are unable to undertake anything more, and what a lamentable confession that is of our want of zeal and earnestness in the cause of the Master; for is it not true

when we care very much, and are deeply interested in any matter of this world, though it be of comparatively small importance, we are willing to risk our health, and to spend every energy of mind and body in order to accomplish it? Why then are we so slack in the things of God? We cannot do the things that we would because we do not care enough about them.

(3) There is no more unlovely thing in a Christian than unkind and ungenerous speech. We know that it is utterly foreign to the spirit of our religion to be speaking of our wrongs, or complaining of our misfortunes and our pains. And perhaps for a little while we hold our peace, and bear our trials in silence. Yet how short-lived that silence is! And we know that there is nothing which so utterly destroys Christian charity as talking of the faults and short-comings of our neighbours, even though we are most careful to say only what we know to be true. And so we determine to hold our peace about others' misdeeds, nothing shall tempt us to break our silence when we cannot say kind and pleasant things of our fellows. Alas, how speedily is the good resolution cast aside, our charitable intentions put to flight! "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would." Howbeit we know very well that we might do far better had we but more perseverance and truer charity.

(4) Who are these people, one might ask, whom we find so tenacious of their rights, so eager to secure the most desirable things for themselves, so ambi-

tious in following out their aims, so jealous of those whom they think to be preferred before them, so constantly concerned in all the affairs of life with their own welfare? They are Christians. Aye ourselves, quite as plainly as anybody else. Is this then the spirit we have learned of our Master, Christ, Who was meek and lowly of heart; Who never sought His own, but always the welfare of others? We hang our heads in shame. We have aspired after that perfect spirit of meekness and unselfishness, yet we have never come anywhere near the attainment of it. We cry out that we cannot do the things that we would. Is not the trouble that we are not willing to embrace the Master's teaching about humility?

(5) We all admit freely that the important thing in true religion is the state of the heart with God. Any man, by determined effort, can keep his outward life, which the world looks upon, upright and stainless, but that is nothing if he tolerate in his mind and imagination evil thoughts and unbecoming ideas. So there are thousands who cherish secret sins with never an honest effort to put them away. And there are thousands more who realize that their inner life is full of things displeasing to God, and who make more or less of effort to conquer the evil, but overwhelmed by its deep-seatedness, and discouraged by its pertinacious reappearance after countless confessions and resolutions of amendment, they cry out, as in despair, we cannot do the things that we would. Is it not true, however, that they have not yet made heroic and persistent effort enough for the overcoming of

the temptation to be warranted in such an utterance?

IV. Yet it is the Holy Ghost who says that we cannot do the things that we would. In what sense are His words, uttered by the Apostle, to be understood? A great spiritual writer reminds us that while we are so weak and unspiritual that we always fail to rise up to the full measure of our possibilities of loyalty, so that in the wholesale it is practically true that we cannot do the things that we would in all particulars, yet, in each specific case, we could always do the thing which our better nature yearns to do if we would. And a great secret of the spiritual life lies hidden in this fact. God's grace never fails, if it be earnestly and loyally sought, to supplement the human will; and the human will so supplemented is always equal to each individual case of temptation, enabling the soul to conquer, doing the thing that in its better self it would. The secret is that the path to spiritual triumph over all the malice of the Evil One lies in the tireless dealing with particular instances of temptation.

(1) One may say, Evil thoughts are perpetually arising in my mind; I do not know whence they come; I hate them, and yet I find myself constantly surrendering to them and letting my passions overmaster my better nature. But then, O soul, if you would endeavour to meet those unbecoming thoughts one by one, as you are conscious of them, you could put them down. Here is one of which I have all at once become aware, lurking like a serpent in the deep places of my heart. How it could have found entrance, I cannot tell. Never mind that. Assail

it now, at once, arouse yourself to hate it; beg God to drive it away; turn your mind to the recitation of some prayer or holy psalm; busy yourself at once about some charitable work which must absorb mind and heart in the doing of it, and lo, the hideous thing is gone, and you have conquered, for you did not dally with it for a second after you were conscious of its nature. You may say, Of what value is it to have beaten down one evil thing, when a thousand others come trooping along after it, just as arrogant, just as dreadful? I cannot conquer them all. Why not, if you will but take them one at a time, so soon as you become aware of their loathsome presence?

(2) Perhaps your great difficulty is an infirmity of temper. You suddenly are conscious that you are in a rage, because of some unkindness, some wanton insult. Don't speak; hold your peace. You did so, you said nothing at all. That was a great victory. But you say, there will be a hundred more similar occasions before the day is over, and I shall surely fall many times. Why should you? Each case comes separately. The moment that you realize that you are in a rage, set yourself to keep back the indignant word, the angry gesture. You can always do it if you try hard enough.

V. Thus does the gracious Spirit of God teach us to fight our own evil nature, and to conquer by His grace. It is likely enough that we shall fall many times, yet we can by persistent effort in dealing with individual instances of temptation, accustom ourselves to victory. Just as one by oft-repeated in-

stances forms habits of mischief, so by many persistent efforts to overcome the evil things do we form, almost unconsciously to ourselves, habits of resistance to the sinful nature which lurks within us. And the Holy Spirit loves to foster and to develop by His celestial grace these habits of righteousness, until they become second nature to us. The soul in its consciousness of many falls cries, I cannot do the things that I would, but little by little it learns to say, as the years go on, if the battle with individual cases of temptation has been unweariedly kept up, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." I suppose it is true for the vast majority of God's servants that at the hour of death they have not gotten on very far in that pursuit of self-conquest, that they are still very much under the sway of evil impulses in many particulars; nevertheless, if they have struggled loyally with the individual cases of temptation when they became conscious of them, they are really victors in God's sight, and in purgatory He will effect, in His own gracious fashion, their perfect cure, forever extirpating from their souls those sinful affections which here so greatly tormented them.

VI. What then is the conclusion of the matter? As noxious, deeply-rooted weeds in the garden, so has God permitted even in the souls of the regenerate the lusts of the flesh to remain with grievous power of mischief in their growth. It is for our probation, that we may show how sincere our Christian profession is, how great our faith in His promises, how tireless our use of the helps of grace. Looking

over the garden of the soul, considering how much there is to be done, how short the time is, and how feeble our own wills, we are fain to cry, we cannot do the things that we would. It is true, I suppose, that no one is equal to the task of absolutely freeing his soul from every root of temptation while in this world. But we are not asked to do that. Only that with faithful use of prayer and holy sacrament, we should apply our wills to each individual root of sin as we become conscious of it lifting up its head in our hearts. There is always strength enough, and grace enough, to overcome each particular temptation, and if we would but take courage to go on tirelessly dealing with one after another, we should wake up some day to the fact that the divine grace had so taken hold of our nature that it is no longer true that we cannot do the things that we would.

THOU BEING OUR RULER AND GUIDE

For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."—(St. Luke vi. 38.)

ONE has suffered a great bereavement. We are never quite ready to have our dear ones taken, no matter how long they have lingered in mortal illness, and the blow of the actual taking away at first seems unbearable. Yet there is such a difference in individuals. This one is urged by friends and relations to go from the scene of her great sorrow for a long visit. There are bright and cheerful homes where she will be a most welcome guest, but she cannot bear the thought of going to any of them. She wants to remain alone, just in the old place, with the old associations all about, and to find some work to do which will keep her busy all day long. Another mourner is persuaded that he should go off on some long journey or foreign tour, where there will be for him a complete break with the old life up to that sad finish, and so gradually to forget his sorrow in change of scene. It does not really make much difference with the heart-aches to those who care a great deal. Things never can be the same as they

were; life has taken on new tones, much more sombre than the old ones. Novel scenes and strange surroundings do not count for so much with us as we get on in life, the things which lie deep down beneath the surface are felt to be the real things. Even one who has been absorbed in all manner of earthly interests as he comes up against more and more bereavements, more and more of life's troubles, ill-health, perhaps, disappointments, losses, finds himself estimating at their true value the things present as compared with those that are unseen. He feels that he is beginning to understand what the Apostle calls "the sufferings of this present time." It is true that we often take a pitifully small view of our sufferings, that we fancy we have a great load of woes indeed, though we are bearing not a tithe of what thousands of our fellows are bearing. Nevertheless, when we think that our cup of sorrow is full, we are fain to contemplate more seriously than we have hitherto, our outlook for the future. One who had not for many years given very deep thought to things eternal came to realize that his health was broken, and that there was not much more time before him in this world. Then he said, he supposed he ought to join some Church, but he wanted one in which they believed in purgatory, for realizing how poor his life had been, he thought there might be hope for him where men endure the penalty of their sins after death. But you see he had it in his mind that he must presently face the judgment of God. Belief in the things of the world to come may be very crude and vague in the minds of people of that sort, yet

there is a genuine longing that they may not lose the things eternal. They have come to believe in those things.

I. In most of our hearts when we think of the future there is a dread of judgment. Men would justify themselves to themselves, they would erect their defences against the divine condemnation.

(1) One will seek to establish his life in strength, that is, in the consciousness of his uprightness and integrity. He delights in the thought that he has never consciously wronged anyone, that his ways have ever been just, and his conduct honourable. There are many who thus pride themselves upon the irreproachableness of their lives, upon the fact that no man could truthfully say anything of them to their discredit. There is no merit however in this sort of integrity; it is no more than every man recognizes as his plain duty. The only reason we glorify the wholly upright man as we do is because he is so exceptional. But that is rather a pathetic acknowledgment of the frailty of our human nature generally. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that God made men merely that they might manifest uprightness of living. That does not appeal to us as an adequate reason for our creation. It is no more than the demonstration of the fact that we are well fitted for such work as may be assigned us by our Maker. It is like the fact that the applicant for enlistment in the army or navy is found upon his physical examination to be wholly sound and perfectly developed in body. That may be a matter of pride to him, a cause of congratulation on the part of his admirers, a matter

of envy to others who are not so well formed, but if he does not go on to enlist in the service, the declaration of the fitness does not profit his country. God cannot have made us for nothing more than uprightness of character. Unless our uprightness be somehow enlisted in glorifying Him, it is a wasted gift. Therefore, the Collect for this fourth Sunday after Trinity reminds us that without God nothing is *strong*. It will not help a man when the hour of judgment comes to have lived an honest and noble life, according to the standards of this world, if he has not endeavoured to serve and glorify his Maker. That is the fatal mistake which many make.

(2) Another recognizes the importance of the religious side of character, but with an over-hasty generalization he persuades himself that humanitarianism is religion. What is holiness? Holiness is unselfishness, the forgetfulness of one's own interest that one may serve and bless one's neighbours. Does not the Bible say that pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world? It does—but let us not forget how much is included in that keeping one's self unspotted from the world. Can we do that without loving and serving God? I do not see how, for there are only those three ends one may say of human effort, God, and the world, and self. We cannot surely keep ourselves unspotted from the world merely by living a self-centered life; that is but the inner aspect of worldliness, and not an admirable one. We cannot hope to find anything that can properly be called

holy if we leave God out of it. Just as without Him there is nothing strong, so without Him there is nothing holy, as our Collect says.

II. It is not to be denied, however, that there is the greatest diversity in men's ideas about duty to God. All right-minded believers in His existence admit that we owe something of service and honour to Him, but of what sort should it be? It is not necessary to our present enquiry that we should enter into that very deeply; let us rather confine ourselves to a few fundamental principles which all must acknowledge as such. There must, for example, be the hearty avoidance of all things which we have reason to suppose displease Him. There may be much difference of opinion as to what is pleasing to God, and what not. It is certain at least that our religion cannot be genuine when we willingly do things which in our own hearts we believe to be displeasing to Him. Yet, who does not? Again, we must be loyally devoted to His interests. We may not all agree with one another as to what God's interests are, nevertheless we are plainly unworthy Christians if we fail to support heartily those things which we believe He cares much about. And which of us does this? We know that we are called upon to love Him. It may be difficult to define what loving God is, but it must mean something, and very few of us make a serious effort to do all that we believe it to mean. In other words, right-minded Christians acknowledge their lives as towards God to be a failure, whatever they may think of them towards their neighbours. And it is for this reason that as we grow older, realizing

more and more our shortcomings towards our heavenly Father, our attitude becomes more and more that of suppliants for mercy. We are conscious that we cannot stand on our merits before Him. I pity the man who fancies he can look God in the face and say, "Thou canst find no fault in me." In theory at least we all praise the attitude of the publican in the parable who stood afar off with downcast eyes, smiting his breast, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The words of the Collect, therefore, ought to find echo in our hearts which say, "Increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy." We have need of increasing mercy because our unworthiness is continually increasing. We believe that we get rid of our sins by honest confession of them, but we do not forget that the ground of that forgiveness is in the divine mercy. We are ever using up, so to speak, that mercy; we are ever in need of fresh supplies of it, for we do not cease to sin. Conscious of our supreme need of mercy we grow daily to pray for this more and more.

III. It is obvious, however, though it seems to be very easily forgotten, that for intelligent and strong-willed people to cry for mercy involves also the submission of their lives to the merciful one, in other words, a consistency in their supplication. It is not as if we were asking pity and pardon at the point of death, when there was no more that we could do; but while our lives are spared to us in this world we should give proof of the sincerity of our cry for mercy by the hearty submission of ourselves to the divine Master. As we say again in the Collect, "That

Thou being our Ruler and Guide." The parish priest is ordinarily among us in this country called a rector. That is the word in the Latin original of our Collect—"Thou being our *Rector* and Guide."

(1) The parish priest may be called a rector because he represents and administers the divine authority. In his proper sphere, that is in things spiritual, he *rules* his congregation. Of course he is but the representative of the Bishop in this respect, and the Bishop but the agent of our Master Christ. But it is important that we should not lose sight of the notion of *authority* conveyed in the word rector. Our religion is from on high, it is not the invention of man. The Apostle spoke of that which he had *received*. His Gospel was not a theology of his own arranging. We are so apt in these democratic days to dwell upon the power of God lodged in the people as to be in danger of forgetting that there are some powers not so lodged in the people but entrusted to the Master's representatives, not through the medium of the congregation, but from on high, through the Apostolic Episcopate. Men would like to rid themselves of the notion of obedience even to laws of their own making. We do not like to feel that we *must* obey anyone; that is contrary to our notion of freedom, and we are passionately determined that we will be free. Then there rises up in the teachings of the Church the dogma of the absolute authority of God over His creatures, requiring of us certain things, and saying, "Although you have temporary power to disobey, and assert yourselves in rebellion against the divine commandment, it will not be so very long ;

just so soon as this world shall come to an end for you, you shall be brought into judgment, and if you be found in rebellion against your Maker, you shall be cast out into everlasting punishment." The believer cannot be faithful who will not recognize this absolute authority of God over him. And it is just because the principle of obedience to the divine commandment is lost sight of in our day to a very great extent, that the hold of religion upon people generally is so feeble. There might be much discussion indeed concerning what God had required of His servants, and that discussion would not be unreasonable; when, however, it is not admitted in the beginning, that what God says must under all circumstances be obeyed, the situation is well nigh hopeless.

(2) Set over against the dogma of the divine Rulership, is the complementary truth to it, in that other wonderful thing which the Collect calls to our minds, that our Lord is also our *Guide*. In our short-sighted human fashion we are wont to look upon the divine rectorship as hard, to think of the obedience that is required of us as unreasonable and tyrannical. Then our Master presents Himself in His other aspect, that of our Guide. He came down from heaven and took upon Him our human nature, first of all indeed that He might die to redeem us, but secondly, that He might Himself first tread all the paths which He bids His faithful ones walk in. He willed to suffer all hardness and pain that any of the children of men can be called upon to suffer, to endure all temptations, to descend into the very depths of woe, to leave no type of misery unproved, in order that no

child of man should ever be asked to bear anything harder than He had borne. It ought not to be difficult to obey such a Master as that when He commands anything of us; when He has Himself gone on first to do the very thing that He requires of us. We cannot, if we be right-minded, fail under such circumstances to perceive that all His commandments are founded in love, and that they are only enjoined upon us for our own everlasting welfare. That is the marvel of His being our Guide. "When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice." When once we have grasped what that means, the infinite love and condescension of His guidance, we are no longer troubled by His ruling.

IV. The consideration of these wonderful and moving facts brings the believer to that state of sublime enthusiasm which the Epistle for this day sets forth. The Apostle breaks out very finely: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." He was no optimist about earth's affairs, he was no easy-going believer who had never known the experience of deep suffering. He had sounded the depths of the world's shame and wretchedness, he did not underestimate it; he had personally endured more than almost anyone save his divine Master, yet so absolute is his trust in the power of the mercy of God that he is confident that all creation shall be delivered by that mercy from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Nothing can daunt his enthusiasm

as to the future, and his confidence in the blessed portion of the saints. Though now it is the part of the elect to groan within themselves, yet it is because they are so sure of the excellence of the good things prepared for them in the day of redemption of the body that they must yearn and sigh because of the long waiting for that great joy.

V. There is a note of warning, however, which the Master sounds in the Gospel. It is right that we should magnify the excellence of His mercy; we cannot over-estimate it; nor, indeed, can we well exaggerate our own undeservingness of that mercy. Yet, we may not fancy that it is to be extended to us without any reciprocity on our part. The wonderful graciousness of the Master's justice in dealing with His followers is that He requires of them in return for His mercy to them that they should illustrate mercifulness in their dealings with their fellows. What could be more in keeping with the whole genius of the Gospel: and what an extraordinary and most simple sort of worthiness it is that is required of us. Melancholy, too, as exhibiting the utter superficiality of our religious profession is the lamentable failure on the part of so many to meet the divine requirement. The mercifulness which He requires of us toward our brethren is threefold:

(1) *Mercifulness in judgment.* "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned." Who is guiltless in this regard? It is one of the plainest precepts of the Gospel, one which approves itself to every man's conscience as sublimely righteous, and one which a

very large part of the Christian world simply ignores. Which of us does not often and often hear his fellow Church members speak uncharitably, often most cruelly of others; which one of us has not been often heard by his fellows doing this very thing? We dislike this one and that one, and we do not care what we say concerning them; our tongues are sharp and cutting. If we could but look forward to the day of our judgment and see how fearfully these things are going to tell against us then, we should learn to show mercy in our speech.

(2) Secondly, mercifulness in *forgiving*. We have been wronged, perhaps very cruelly and wantonly. How can we forgive? "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven," says the Master. He adds elsewhere, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." So we deliberately pronounce our own judgment in the day that we refuse in our hearts to forgive those who have done us injury. It was such base and heartless injury. Well! look upon the cross, with the gentle Christ pale and bleeding hanging there; it is the injury we have done Him. Was that base and heartless injury? O unforgiving ones, you will need forgiveness more than you can dream of now in the day that your souls go out to stand before your Lord, and you will not find it.

(3) Mercifulness in *giving*. "Give and it shall be given unto you," says the Master. It is so hard for us to give just because there is need of giving, not because we have abundance and can spare a little easily; not because we love the consciousness of giv-

ing, the sense of being reckoned generous, and of having the gratitude of those whom we have helped, but because there is need of help and we are at hand and recognize the need. Then it does not become a question of liking, or not liking it, it is something laid upon us. It is not of any consequence whether we have much or little, we are bound to do all we can towards meeting the necessity; not indeed that we should encourage others in idleness, and in contracting debts, but that we should relieve actual want and keep people from starving and from suffering from cold and want of shelter. The mercifulness of giving consists in feeling that it is our business to help any needy case that is at our doors, so to speak; not worrying about the things we cannot do, but doing what we can.

VI. The things temporal; how quickly we run our appointed course through them, and then find ourselves standing on the brink of the things eternal! What have we to depend upon then? Only upon our Master, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy. We have been carried on all through our life here by His mercy, if only He would increase and multiply it upon us as we go down to cross the dark river. He has been hitherto our Ruler and our Guide—is it true, have we loyally obeyed and lovingly followed in His footsteps? The answer is to be sought largely in our life among our neighbours, if we have been actually good Christians, faithful in our use of prayer and holy sacrament. The solemn refrain of the judgment chant comes to our ears across the water, “With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.”

THE PROPORTION OF FAITH

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.”—(Rom. xii. 6.)

IT pleased God in the olden days when comparatively little of His wonderful plan for man's redemption had been revealed, to make known His will to His people, the Israelites, by prophets. A prophet is one who is supernaturally laid hold on by the Holy Ghost, and enabled to see spiritual things not revealed to the comprehension of the uninspired. To our minds the notion of prophecy is almost entirely associated with the prediction of future events, yet the gift of prophecy includes more than that. It includes a power of spiritual insight into the hidden things of God, an understanding of His mysteries on the part of the inspired, more perfect than that vouchsafed to uninspired men; and it includes furthermore a force or energy impelling utterance on the part of the inspired one of the supernatural things made known to him. The prophet is moved to declare his vision. Yet it is to be noted at this point that he has free agency to utter or to re-

strain his voice. It may cost effort to control the desire to speak, but it is not out of the power of the prophet to do so. It may be pain and grief to him to keep silence from good words, but it is not impossible. And this is a very important point. It would seem indeed as if the Holy Spirit, in Old Testament days, took such possession of the prophets that they sometimes could not hold their peace. There are instances in which the individuality of the man seems wholly lost in the sublimity of his utterance, as when Balaam, the wicked prophet, was impelled to pronounce those superb predictions concerning the Messiah. So overmastering too was the possession taken by the divine Spirit that the prophet, as Ezekiel, for example, utters many strange, mysterious sentences, of the meaning of which he himself probably knew nothing. After the Old Testament dispensation had passed, we find the Christian Church, in the earliest days, with its prophets also. The gift of prophecy is expressly declared to be one of the fruits of the pentecostal outpouring. St. Peter so interprets the words of the prophet Joel, "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." And so we find that there were many prophets in the Apostolic days. In the assemblies for worship the Spirit would come upon them, and they would give utterance to strange visions of celestial things and in-

terpretations of the truth of God. We need not suppose that these prophecies were not understood by the congregation generally, for they appear to have been so, but it is to be noted that while great liberty was allowed such specially inspired ones to proclaim what had been revealed to them, there was a due order always preserved in the Church. The prophets must take their turns, and must not be wholly independent in their manner of speech. The rulers of the assemblies always had power to stop them and to regulate their utterances. They might not plead that their possession by the Spirit robbed them of their free-agency. The Apostle expressly declares that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." But, more than that, there was a settled deposit of the faith, even before the books of the New Testament were written. We are told, you remember, that the new converts on the day of Pentecost continued stedfastly in the Apostles' *doctrine* and fellowship. So St. Jude, in his Epistle, spoke of the faith which was once (literally, once for all) delivered unto the saints. The prophets in the exuberance of their inspiration might sometimes dwell to excess upon certain aspects of the faith. The Apostle would not allow this; the inspiration which they had was perfectly under control and did not take from them their intellectual capacity and will power. They must not let their visions run away with them, but must order all their utterances so as to preserve the due proportion, the balance of the faith. This is the simple meaning of the text, and a very important one, it seems to me. For, in these days we may not

any of us lay claim to supernatural illumination concerning divine things, and yet we are very apt to fancy that our own conscientious convictions and beliefs rise superior to the shackles of traditional theology. If the inspired prophets of early days were required to prophesy according to the proportion of faith, much more are uninspired folk, like ourselves, bound to regulate our beliefs and practices by the standards of the Church.

I. It is quite true that some of the things that were well known in the early Church have ceased to be practical realities for ourselves; as, for example, those prophesyings, the working of outward miracles, and the exorcising of evil spirits. I suppose that the Church has been gradually growing into the consciousness of her inheritance, attaining to her maturity, so to speak, and therefore leaving behind the things of her childhood's days. We have now the clear and ever-growing voice of the traditional teaching of the Catholic religion, and the devout writings of hundreds of great saints of God to enlighten our understandings in the ways of the kingdom. We have the more spiritual, yet not less marvellous miracles wrought by prayer and sacramental grace in lieu of the supernatural deeds of healing done in Apostolic days. As for the evil spirits, I suppose that their power has suffered so great diminution by reason of grace, that special services of exorcism are rarely required. The Church is full of the wealth of prophetic teaching, of the treasures accumulated by the spiritual insight and the divine illumination vouchsafed to multitudes of holy souls adown the

Catholic centuries. These are our prophecies for the understanding of Holy Scripture, and the written Word itself is our storehouse of prophecy, with its imperishable records of the teaching of Apostolic men inspired by the Holy Ghost, making known to us the clear truth of God upon many subjects which otherwise had been too hard for us. We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that over and above the written Word there is the solid body of the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints, the Catholic tradition, crystallized in the words of creeds and liturgies, in solemn decisions of councils and other authorized doctrinal statements of holy Church. Not that I would have you think there can possibly be any conflict between the Bible and the Catholic tradition, for they must ever be in truest accord, but that they are two distinct witnesses, each covering its own proper ground, and each confirming and interpreting the other.

(1) There are many things clearly and precisely defined in the Church's creed which you cannot find so precisely stated in Holy Scripture. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity. The Church always maintains that the Scripture supports and illuminates her doctrinal statements, and in the case of the Trinity this is most evident. For it is impossible to reconcile in any way that which the New Testament says concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, save by the acknowledgment of the Catholic doctrine of the three Persons in one God. That harmonizes every passage; yet it is very doubtful whether the doctrine of the Trinity could have

been collected by any individual man out of the Bible alone. The Church is never afraid to take all her teachings to the Bible, and she is able to demonstrate in every case that nothing but those teachings can reconcile all that the Scriptures say upon the points at issue. Those who reject the Catholic tradition and go immediately to the Bible to collect for themselves the facts of our Lord's religion, are hopelessly at disagreement in regard to very fundamental points.

(2) Nor is it less true that there are many matters of devout Christian practice and duty not insisted upon by any of the creeds and doctrinal statements of the Church; for she assumes that her children will be taught from her pulpits the exquisite moral lessons and spiritual precepts for devout living of which the Scriptures are full. She does not maintain that her tradition is sufficient for the spiritual needs of mankind without any Bible, but she is zealous ever to have her children constantly drilled and trained in those wonderful lessons of virtuous and holy living of which the Bible is full, to say nothing of that which is the greatest thing of all, the marvellous story of our Lord's life upon earth, and the holy example which is set us in that.

II. What then is the proportion, or the balance of faith, of which the Apostle speaks? It is something which implies a system, indeed an elaborate and well-ramified system, each part being relative to every other part, and to the whole. The more God's way of dealing with His creatures is studied, the more complicated, as we say, perhaps it were better

to say the more interwoven and interdependent they are found to be. In nature nothing is independent, every part has its relation, no matter how insignificant, to all the rest, and the moment that relation is disturbed, as man is perpetually disturbing it, with the idea of improving upon God's arrangement, and furthering his own ends, there are found mischief and disorder. So in the human body, there is the most wonderful interdependence of the parts, one upon another, descending to the minutest particulars. Man thinks that he can afford to disregard the divine balance of things in his organization, but his error is generally a costly one. So the system of the Church, handed down from the beginning, is all inter-related, and one cannot set aside a single doctrine, or a single practice which has Catholic authority, without seriously impairing the whole character of the divine religion. The doctrinal system of the Church has to do, first, with the divine Being, His nature and attributes; then with the Passion and Death of the Son of God in human nature, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the coming of the Holy Ghost, the founding of the Church, the time of probation, the Judgment, the Eternal Kingdom of Righteousness. There is also just as compactly jointed a system for the individual Christian life. It must be continued in Confirmation, the seven-fold gift of the heavenly armor of the Holy Ghost. It must be sustained and developed by Holy Communion, the very partaking of the Body and Blood of the Lord. And for all wounds and sickness of the soul, those melancholy deeds of sin which so defile

the man and separate him from the life of Christ and from the benign influences of the Holy Ghost, there is the wonder-working grace of Absolution, ministered in the sacrament of Penance. You see how elaborate and well-rounded out a system that of the Catholic religion is, whether you consider it from the point of view of its doctrinal standards, or from that of its practical working system for the redemption of the individual. Nor is it less wonderful if you view it in the aspect of worship. Wherewith could sinful man approach his Maker to honour Him with worthy service? His gifts, his treasures, his work! These are nothing to the Most High, and all marred as they are with human infirmity and sin, in no wise acceptable of themselves. There is no offering which can be acceptably offered by fallen man save that which was offered on Calvary. Therefore God has supernaturally arranged to perpetuate that offering in His Church by means of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Nothing could be more marvellous, nothing more complete and all-satisfying from every point of view than this great Eucharistic sacrifice. All of this offering has been precisely and definitely ordered for the Church by the divine appointment. There is nothing like it in the whole world, or in any system of man's devising. Each part has its own place, yet is in all manner of ways related to every other part in perfect adjustment. No man may come and say, "I will believe *this*, *that* I cannot believe; this I will do, that I shall not do; this feature of worship appeals to me, and so I accept it; that other does not, therefore I reject it." For by such eclecti-

cism the whole system is overturned and made worthless. What profits it that our Lord has been born into the world if He died not for sinners? How can His death upon the cross be of any value for us if He be not divine? If the Holy Ghost works not through the sacraments of the Church, what boots it to hold that He is one of the Persons of the divine Trinity? If there be no Church to maintain the true faith, and the means of grace, and the right form of worship, to what end were truth and grace, and the form of sacrifice revealed to us? It is said in the Scripture that if a man offend against the law of God in one point he is guilty of all. That means that where there is conscious disobedience to the divine will in any part of that which is commanded, all obedience in other particulars is futile. It is of no use for me to go to Church on Sunday, and to keep myself from sins of theft and adultery and lying, if I am consciously and wilfully cherishing uncharitableness in my heart, not forgiving wrongs done against me, looking for and desiring vengeance. By that unchristlike spirit I put myself outside the pale of loyalty, and none of my fancied good deeds have the smallest value in heaven's eyes. And just the same thing is true of the Church's system. If one deliberately reject a single doctrine, knowing it be a part of the truth which God has revealed, he might as well fling away the whole creed. None of the other articles will help him. If one wilfully refuse to use any sacrament of the Church, knowing that he ought to use it, he might as well give up Christianity entirely, for the other sacraments can-

not profit him. It is all or none, to the limit of the revelation given us.

III. It is very important to keep this fairly in our minds, because it is the most natural thing for us to be swayed by our feelings or our reason into disregarding the proportion of the faith. One aspect of the truth appeals to us as so beautiful or so important to the welfare of mankind, that we dwell upon it with enthusiasm, and are fain to overlook, or perhaps even to disparage other articles of the faith equally important, and necessary to be kept in view, lest we lose the proper balance of the truth. Men in these days become so fascinated by the perfection and loveliness of our Lord's humanity, that they practically lose sight of His divinity. It is so necessary, in their opinion, to bring men into touch with Him, as man, that His divinity must be minimized or kept in the background, so as not to frighten them off. And we have the unhappy anomaly of priests of the Church fraternizing with Unitarian preachers, and practically teaching their heresy from the Church's pulpit. Such priests do not perhaps think that they are doing this; they do not realize all the horrible consequences involved in such a course; they are simply carried away by their zeal for the perfection of our Lord's humanity, to the neglect of the proportion of faith.

IV. Another aspect of the same matter is that which is found where people say that they are not able to believe this or that doctrine of the Catholic faith. There is the specious argument wherewith we deceive ourselves that one cannot force his belief;

he cannot believe that which does not appeal or approve itself to his reason, or, more frequently, his imagination. A man thinks that he has settled the matter for himself when he says, "It is impossible for me to believe such and such a doctrine; as, for example, that of the eternal punishment of the wicked." Now what does he mean by believing? Suppose that I should say, "It is impossible for me to believe that the human voice can be heard, by telephone, or in any other way, from New York to Chicago." One might well have said that twenty-five years ago. All that I can mean is that such a thing seems incredible to my mind. But so soon as I find out through evidence of those who have made trial of it, that it is a fact, I accept it. I do believe it, though it is just as incomprehensible to my mind as before, how it can be. The moment one acknowledges the authority which speaks concerning divine things, it is not hard to accept whatsoever that authority imposes: and that the truth concerning divine things should be difficult of grasp by our human reason, and inconceivable by our human imagination, is not to be wondered at; indeed, it is just what one should expect. We are not called upon to reconcile things to our reason, nor to picture them in our imagination, in order to believe them. We have but to accept them as facts, resting upon unimpeachable authority, and to act on them, and to speak of them as facts.

V. Regarded in this fashion the faith becomes a great and clear system of revealed truth, harmonized in its proportion, and adjusted perfectly each

part to all the rest, by the divine wisdom. It is a system which includes the whole realm of the relations of God to the human creature, so far as it is important for us to know them. The Bible is the divinely written part of this revelation, the tradition of the Church, its divinely organized part, consisting of the formal dogmas of the faith and the devout practices of the Christian life. There can be no conflict between the Bible and tradition, for it is to the tradition of the Church that we owe the Bible as the Word of God, and she is the keeper and interpreter of the sacred volume. If one shall ask what guarantee have we for the inerrancy of the Church in her tradition, the answer is the *universality* of that tradition. The Lord promised indefectibility to His Church, and the way in which that indefectibility has been maintained is the substantial unity of all parts of the Church. All doctrines and practices of her tradition must bear this stamp of universality, and must be plainly perceived to be the same throughout Christendom, even as they have been from the beginning of the Church's existence. For any doctrine which cannot show universality, or any practice which is not known to all, no authority compelling obedience can be claimed. This great body of the faith is to be accepted by all loyal children of the Church. Then whatever individual prophecies they may be given grace from God to utter, must be in harmony with such body of the faith. We must ever speak of divine things in deference to it, we must ever ourselves act in loyalty to it. There is no room for further revelation in the Church, the faith has been delivered once

for all. Our business is but to be true to it ourselves, and to guard it loyally, that we may pass it on to our posterity, carefully preserving not only its whole body, but the due proportion of its every part, according to the system which the Church universal received from our Lord's Apostles in the beginning.

A RIGHT FAITH

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon-Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."—(St. Matt. xvi. 17.)

WE MAY not overlook the fact that throughout Holy Writ God represents Himself as caring very greatly for loyalty to Himself. We could not take such a small view of Deity as to fancy that in itself the loyalty or disloyalty of any creature could be of serious consequence to the Creator. We cannot but feel that the stress which He lays upon this duty of loyalty is for our sakes, because He cares so much for us, and would not that we should forfeit the destiny which He has purposed for us by our failure to correspond to His grace. The wise parent exacts dutiful obedience and respectful deference from his child, not for his own sake, but for the child's, that he may grow up a well-bred man. So all through the Bible we find disloyalty to God treated as the most grievous sin. Our first parents in the garden seemed to do nothing intrinsically very dreadful when they plucked the forbidden fruit and ate it. Yet that one transgression caused their ex-

pulsion from Eden, and the downfall of the whole race born of them. It was an act of wilful disobedience to the divine command. In like manner we have the ancient people of Israel cut off and rejected as a nation because of their persistent idolatries. They did not fall into many moral delinquencies, but the crying offense which eventually caused the national ruin was the worship of false gods, whereby the true worship of Jehovah was set at nought. In later days, when the Messiah Himself had come, the Jews were rejected and their place taken away, because they would not acknowledge their Saviour. Their crime was a horrible one, in giving Him up to be crucified, yet back of that lay the root sin which was grievous above all the rest of their transgressions in the divine eyes, that they had refused to receive our Lord as God.

I. Fitting in with all this comes the extraordinary reward of St. Peter's act of faith, of which the Gospel tells us to-day. The Master had asked His followers whom men declared Him to be, not, of course, because He would hear that which as God He knew far more perfectly than they could tell Him, but, manifestly, as the sequel shows, that He might call forth that sublime confession from St. Peter: "Whom do ye say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was no heroic deed of love, no magnificent act of self-sacrifice, it was but the simple utterance of an enthusiastic faith in his Master; nevertheless, it was rewarded as the greatest and worthiest of all deeds in the sight of God. And it is the

more remarkable that our Lord should reward the faith of His Apostle as He did, for one may say it was yet untried. In a moment of inspiration St. Peter had risen to the pinnacle of loyal acknowledgment of His Master, yet presently he was to fall back and miserably to deny that Master. Again, we see it in all the hand of God, for only He could have looked through that lamentable fall of the great-hearted one, and have perceived his fitness for restoration to the highest dignity of trust and service. Let us note the rewarding of St. Peter's faith.

(1) "I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." We need not seek too curiously for the exact meaning of this passage. The great commentators are divided as to whether the confession of faith in the divinity of our Lord was the rock on which the Church was built, or, whether it was St. Peter himself who was the rock, for his name, Cephias or Peter, means at least a stone. Or, yet again, it may be that our Lord Himself is the Rock, which is certainly true, as indeed all the other interpretations are true; for no one of them excludes the others. Probably it is the divinity of our Lord which is the rock on which the Church is built, though it is likewise built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, our Lord being the chief corner-stone. It is significant, however, that the Master goes on to reward St. Peter with the gift of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And this celestial janitorship is something nowhere else given in the same way to the rest of the Apostles. It is quite

true that the same power of binding and loosing, with the promise of the ratifying of their exercise of that power in heaven is given to all, presently, as it is to St. Peter here. But we cannot but notice a special stress laid upon this first bestowing of the keys upon the Apostle who had first confessed his Lord's divinity. It is plain enough throughout the Acts of the Apostles that St. Peter was their leader and head, at least in the earlier years of his ministry. Yet, it is equally plain that there is no trace of any monarchical supremacy for that great Apostle, such as is now claimed for the bishops of Rome. We read of James, Cephas (that is, Peter), and John, "who seemed to be pillars." We find St. John at the first associated with St. Peter, and then we find St. Paul coming to the front, as having received an independent call to the Apostleship direct from our Lord Himself, and not through the choice of St. Peter and his fellows, as St. Matthias did. No one can read the Acts and fancy that St. Peter was in any sense set over St. Paul as his superior, and as holding for him the place of Vicar of Christ.

(2) It is not my purpose at this time to enter into any discussion of the papal claims, but I think it right in passing to state what is the true and Catholic understanding of the great words spoken by our Lord to St. Peter. I would ask you to remember this, that, grant what you please of primacy in St. Peter over his fellows in the Apostolic college, there is never a hint in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, to connect St. Peter's primacy with the bishopric of Rome.

That must ever be the weakest spot in the papal theory, for there is absolutely no contemporaneous evidence that St. Peter purposed to hand down such authority as was his to any successor, much less to tie up that privilege, however unique it may have been, in the See of Rome. The simple fact is that circumstances and the action of the Church universal gave the primacy to the Bishop of Rome, who afterwards laboured to develop that primacy into a monarchy, and then to bolster it up with large conclusions drawn from the Petrine texts. It is easy for a clever controversialist to throw dust into the eyes of those who have not thought much about the matter, and to persuade them that St. Peter's primacy in the Apostolic College involves the whole papal theory, yet it is not difficult for open-minded men to perceive that there is an enormous difference in principle between the position of the Archbishop of Canterbury, if you please, among the English bishops, and the authority which is claimed for the Pope over the whole world; an enormous difference between the sort of authority which the President of our country wields, and that which in theory is possessed by the Czar of Russia. A primacy among equals is radically different in principle from the dignity of an infallible and autocratic monarch of the whole world.

II. Yet leaving the matter of the papacy, one cannot but look with admiration upon the wonderful system and work of the Roman Church. It is easy to point out flaws and errors, and there are any number of practical abuses in the papal system which

cry out for reform, nevertheless it remains true that the Roman Catholic Church to-day is supplying millions of people in every part of the world with the essentials of the ancient religion of our Master in a most wonderful way. How can we account for the evident divine favour which rests upon that Communion in spite of so many things which we cannot but feel to be displeasing to God in its practical worship? I believe the answer is to be found in the extraordinary tenacity with which Rome clings to the old faith, guards it and teaches it boldly and tirelessly. We profess the same old faith, but how little it is taught in our pulpits, how haltingly it is carried out in practice in the vast majority of our churches. And it goes to illustrate that which I said a little while ago, that God represents Himself to us as caring very much indeed for a right faith on the part of His people. The Greeks do indeed hold the ancient faith, and now teach it practically and in a way zealously, yet for centuries the Oriental Communion was torn with heresies, and one or other of the great Patriarchates of the East was constantly lapsing into error; but, with trifling exceptions, Rome has always been a bulwark of the Catholic faith, and in that way, seems indeed to have inherited the promise of our Lord given to St. Peter because of his splendid confession of his Master's divinity.

III. But now the question arises, which is peculiarly apt to arise in our day, Why is so much stress to be laid upon this matter of the faith? Of what importance is it what a man believes if his life be right? That is a specious question which blinds a

great many people to the important reality. If belief were something each one had to originate for himself, or to obtain from his fellows who were cleverer at speculation and investigation than himself, it might indeed be true that it was of small consequence what one believed if he lived virtuously. But let us take heed as to what a Christian must mean by *the faith*. It is *the truth* which God has been pleased to reveal concerning Himself and the eternal things, which are to be the only things which remain after this world has passed away. Is *truth* of importance to us? A man might reason carelessly that the truth about many things is not of importance to us in our everyday lives. How much, for example, are we concerned about the facts of botany or of geology? They are interesting to students, but they do not have any value for our ordinary lives. Shall we say the same about the facts of the divine religion?

(1) In the first place, it is right that we should lay down the principle that just because God has been at pains to reveal the truth concerning himself and our destiny, it must be important for us to know it. A man may indeed dispute with me as to whether or not the Bible is a genuine revelation of truth from God, but, if it be once admitted that it is, it cannot but be of the nature of a grave disrespect if we hold that the facts so revealed do not concern us practically. To reveal things supernaturally is equivalent to saying that it is important that they should be known. For the child to say to his father, after that father has spent much time and care in telling him

of things he deems it necessary he should know, "I do not agree with you as to the importance of these things," is plainly a very unfilial attitude; how much more when the creature child so speaks to the Creator Father!

(2) In addition to this consideration, and in cases where there is a genuine and not wilful doubt as to whether revelation be truly revelation, it is the part of all earnest folk to seek to know the truth. In every department of earthly investigation men regard the attainment of the truth as of the greatest importance; they are passionately devoted to the search of it. You ask some devotee of a particular branch of investigation why he is so tireless in the pursuit of his aim, and he will reply, "For the truth's sake." It is of the greatest value to man to know the facts in whatever direction he can find out anything about them. This desire to know whatever may be known is implanted in us. It may be indeed that some lines of investigation seem to be followed out of mere curiosity without any definite desire to help and benefit the world; yet it were certainly unjust to attribute that motive to the thousands of patient investigators in every department of study who, at vast pains and expense to themselves, are seeking the truth about nature's secrets. It must be important that we should know the facts. How greatly human life is helped in a thousand fields of investigation! Indeed, I suppose there is hardly a new fact discovered that is not found sooner or later to have practical bearing on the condition of mankind for weal or for woe. God has given us the

power of investigating and discovering all sorts of hidden forces and hidden facts, and it is good to do what we can to further this search after truth.

(3) It is not to be overlooked, however, that there is a snare in it. There is great danger lest a man become one-sided in his study. The wise have noted this very often, that when a man becomes absorbed in one line of investigation, he is apt to lose judgment and the sense of proportion with regard to other lines of research. It is notoriously and unhappily true, that many of the cleverest investigators of the world's secrets lose all sense of the value of spiritual studies and the things of the soul's welfare. If there be any truth about God, other than that which the study of nature reveals; if there be any facts about the future and man's relation to the infinite and eternal things, must it not be of the supremest importance that we seek to know that truth, to possess ourselves of those facts? The answer to this, very often is, that in theory what is urged is true enough, but that we cannot ever arrive at any certainty with regard to spiritual things; therefore it is worthless to investigate. Yet if it be probable that there are spiritual facts, of the utmost interest to us, and that we cannot hope to arrive at them by our own investigations, is it not still more probable that there has been a revelation of them given from on high, and is not the venerable and world-wide claim of the Church to have in her keeping such a revelation, a claim demanding our investigation?

IV. This is what we would urge concerning the importance of faith. It is easy to say, "What does it

matter whether a man believes aright so long as he lives aright?" But can he live aright if he does not believe aright? If he does not believe our Lord to be God, how can he honour Him as God? And if He be God, will He be content to have His creature treat Him as no more than man? It is easy to assume that one cannot believe, that belief is not a thing that the will can enforce upon the soul, but that arises from a misconception with regard to belief. Belief is no more than the acceptance of facts received upon testimony *as facts*, and acting accordingly. It does not involve a conscious grasp of the truth by the imagination, which is of more interest to the believer, but the essential thing is the acceptance of that which God has revealed on His authority, no matter whether it makes any appeal to the imagination or not. It cannot be a matter of no importance whether we admit the facts of our existence and our relation to almighty God or not. A man may say that he does not believe that there is an epidemic of yellow fever or of the cholera in such and such a place where he lives, nor does he believe that there is any value in the prophylactics which the medical men enjoin. The result of his unbelief is apt to be serious for himself, but it is perfectly certain that he could have satisfied himself as to the facts had he so desired. Another may say that he does not believe that there is any hereafter, or that there is any use of living uprightly, except so far as to stand well in the community; but is that likely to help him any when he comes to die?

(1) Some one, however, urges, if a man really cannot believe in a hereafter and in a God, surely, God will not hold him responsible for that. One can see that such an argument is absurd, if God has made the facts of the faith as clear and strong as the facts of health and vitality here in this world. There is evidence enough for the divine existence and the future state to have convinced the vast majority of mankind, as well as countless numbers of the most learned and intelligent among men. Surely the few who claim to be atheists might well distrust their own judgment and study the matter more carefully.

(2) But, again, there are a thousand and one subjects connected with religion for which the evidence is not nearly so clear, nor in any wise so universal as the existence of God and a hereafter. It is impossible, of course, to fix the degree of responsibility for every individual, nevertheless, when one starts from the standpoint of Christianity, he cannot escape the enormous volume of the testimony of the Catholic Church from the beginning; as a Jesuit writer puts it, "The faith of millions." From the beginning the enormous majority of the Christian world has held to one creed, one form of ministry, one sacramental system, one manner of divine worship. The evidence in favour of this system must be very great indeed for one who acknowledges our Lord and His Apostles as the founders of Christianity; so that a man only stamps himself a careless and thoughtless one who says, "I cannot believe in the Real Presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist, or in the power of priests to forgive sins"; unless he

has honestly and carefully studied these matters. One might reply that the same line of argument involves the acceptance of the whole Roman position because Romanists form a majority of the Christian world. But it does not, for the Roman position cannot be proved to go back to Apostolic times. Its adherents have by no means been a majority among Christians in all the centuries of our era; and even at the present day there are approximately 100,000,000 Oriental believers and 25,000,000 Anglican believers who do not acknowledge the papal claims. The evidence for the Catholic position in Christianity is overwhelming, and may not be lightly dismissed by any man without peril to his soul.

V. With all our glorying in our learning and our enlightenment, we live in the midst of an all-enveloping mystery which hangs as a pall just outside the confines of each man's earthly span, just beyond each man's present moment, for the matter of that. It has pleased the good God to make known to us through His Church many great and startling truths concerning our relation to Himself the end for which we were destined, and the means whereby that end is to be attained. The facts concern us more deeply and intimately than any facts of this present world; they must be of the gravest importance from the very way in which God has taken to make them known to us. For this reason it is the height of folly to say that it makes no difference what a man believes. His conduct must be moulded by his belief, and wrong belief must imperil his future very seriously. It is not to be denied that

God is infinitely merciful, and that He will find every excuse that is rightly to be made for any man, but is a wanton and idle disregard of the facts which He has most plainly revealed likely to be reckoned by Him as a pardonable ignorance? The Church rightly glorifies faith; St. Peter stands out preëminently as one who had the strongest and loftiest faith, though indeed his courage gave out when his loyalty was put to the test, and the Master in His magnificent promise to His Apostle has forever declared to us how precious a gift faith is in His sight.

TAKING UP ONE'S BED

"Then saith He to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."—(St. Matt. ix. 6.)

THE story whence our text is taken is a very remarkable one in more than one way. It was at Capernaum, called our Lord's own city. He had just come into town after a considerable absence, and so soon as the people found it out, they crowded about the house. In most cases curiosity drew them, for the Master had become famous. But there was a poor paralytic whose friends believed the Lord would cure him, though he himself seems to have had less faith. So four of them took up the mattress on which he lay, and proceeded to the house. The crowd would not let them pass, therefore they mounted to the roof—no difficult matter in those small houses of one story—and, removing the tiling, let down the sick man in his bed right into the room where our Lord was. It is expressly told us that our Lord recognized the faith of the bearers, but it is probable that the sick man himself had a certain degree of faith too, though it was obscured at the time by discouragement about himself. He was

probably very conscientious, and realized that he had been a great sinner, so that he deserved not mercy at the Master's hand. Thus his penitence stood him in the stead of faith. The Lord took occasion to show to His enemies and to all the bystanders, that He had power on earth to forgive sins. He first absolved the poor paralytic, and then bade him, Arise, take up his bed, and go unto his house. It is certainly noteworthy that our Lord added this detail of taking up the bed. We have a parallel instance in the account of the healing of the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, related by St. John. This poor fellow had been a cripple for thirty-eight years, and had for a long time been waiting his chance to get into the healing pool after the angel had given the waters virtue enough for the cure of one sufferer. But someone had always anticipated him. Him the Lord healed immediately with the words, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." In both instances the grateful man obeyed, and we are told in the case of the one at Bethesda that he was faulted by the Jews for so doing, because it was the Sabbath day. His answer to them is full of significance: "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, 'Take up thy bed and walk.' "

I. But why did our Lord bid this action in both cases? Doubtless there were reasons in the divine mind which you and I cannot know now, yet there are at least two such reasons which we are permitted to see.

(1) The first, that the man might give plain proof to all whom he met that he had been perfectly

healed. No doubt in both instances the helpless ones were well known to their fellow-townsmen. They had been dependent upon the charity of others for so long. Now they are seen not merely going about on their own feet, recovered from their respective infirmities, but in full strength and vigour, able easily to bear their beds back to their homes.

(2) The second reason, surely, was one for the delivered men themselves. They are not to stand by the Master Who had done such things for them, receiving the congratulations of wondering friends, answering the questions of curious inquirers, and so probably losing the sense of the goodness of God to them; but they were to go back to their homes, bearing their beds, induced by that very circumstance to reflect upon the wonderful change that had come over their lives; that now they were carrying with easy strength the couches on which so long they had lain, all through the goodness of that strange prophet of Galilee.

II. It seems to me that the whole story has its striking significance for our own Christian lives. I suppose—I hope—that we have all been converted; that is, that in addition to the graces we received at our Baptism, and our Confirmation, in our Communion, by means of our Confessions, we have consciously given our hearts to God; that we are truly in earnest in our desire and effort to live worthy Christian lives. He has been pleased in His own wonderful way to set us free from the blight and darkness, the sinful state of our past days. Then one would think that we ought to go on very joyously in life,

feeling free, full of faith and hope and love, never again to be in bondage. And there is often a great deal of buoyancy of spirit after people are first converted, especially if the conversion has come suddenly, through some strong spiritual impulse. The change in the believer is so great from the experiences of the life of disregard of God that he keeps dwelling upon it all the time and is consciously elated. Even where the conversion comes slowly without any well-defined moment of heart-conquest, there is apt to be a great peace and content in the soul, springing from the realization of the surrender of one's self to God. Howbeit, in most cases, this blitheness of spirit does not continue. The converted soul presently finds itself strangely heavy and apathetic towards the things of God, a weight seems to oppress it; it is hardened as perhaps it never was in the old days of its indifference. What is the explanation of this? Our Lord has bidden it carry its bed. Let us analyze this bearing of the bed a little more; this consciousness of depression in our spiritual life which is likely to come over us all from time to time.

(1) We are startled to find, as in some moment of introspection, or as the result of the chance word of another, that we have by no means lost our interest in the things of this world, as we had hoped. I do not mean that the believer ought to be an anchorite, a recluse, dead to all the concerns of the world; but it is certainly of the essence of our religion that the world's matters have only a second place in our thoughts and affections, that they no longer distract and oppress our hearts; that our Lord's business be

the chiefest thing for us always. Therefore, when one finds that he is much more interested in the things of the present than in those of the future; that he is troubled and anxious about temporal concerns; that he allows the business of this life to take off his attention from divine things; that his religion seems to interfere with his world life, so that it has constantly to give way to the exigencies of that world life—when one finds all this to be the case with him in spite of the fact that he gave his heart to God long ago, or thought that he did, it startles him.

(2) Again, how often it comes to be a part of our Christian experience that the old lusts and sinful appetites which we persuaded ourselves we had put away forever, come back, and with greater force, it seems to us, than they used to have. It is terrifying to find one's self in the throes of some dreadful passion which we know to be utterly inconsistent with our Christian walk, and to find that we cannot banish the temptation. It comes up time after time, mocking us like some grinning skeleton, and insists on our yielding to its loathsome suggestions; we even fear that we shall do so; we are not sure that we have not already done so. It is very hard indeed with regard to the fleshly appetites to say exactly where temptation becomes sin, there is so much apparently involuntary yielding which we might have controlled by the will, and so much voluntary yielding, as it seems to the sensitive conscience, which was really not voluntary at all. Yet it is disheartening in the extreme to have our souls overspread with great floods of sensual desire when we thought that sort of sin was left

far behind long ago. We are not so proficient in the Christian life as we had thought; indeed, we wonder whether we are not hypocrites, or at least backsliders.

(3) Yet, again, the wave of infidelity sweeps over our souls in so many cases. We are sure that we did not formerly have any doubts about the life and work of our Lord, about His miracles and His sacraments. We believed firmly in the Real Presence, in the absolving power of the priesthood, in all the doctrines of the Church. But now the most hideous doubts oppress us. We cannot realize the divine presence any more; the sacramental life has become utterly unreal to us; the worship of the Church an empty form. We do not feel that we are in touch with God when at our prayers; we are but pouring words into the empty air. It is most depressing to have this consciousness of unreality sweep over us, concerning all the deepest things of our religion; the things we once believed in so ardently, and loved so devotedly, and found so great comfort in them. This sort of experience I believe to be very common at times in the lives of believers; people who are in all ordinary ways, living just as blamelessly and devoutly as ever they did.

III. It comes over one, perhaps, very gradually, yet with conviction, that he is carrying the old bed on which he lay so long in the years that he cared nothing for God. For the bed of the palsied man, or that of the infirm man at Bethesda, is that in which he found the only alleviation and satisfaction of his life in the days of his affliction before the gracious Master came to him with the words of healing. It

was bad enough to be so helpless and infirm, yet at least one had a bed to rest one's limbs upon. So when we were without thought of God in the world life, before our conversion, the consolations of our daily existence were the occupations and the interests of this present, its duties and its pleasures. Our gratifications were those of the natural inclinations, not subject to the laws of God; and we had our own unbelieving philosophy, which satisfied the questionings of conscience sufficiently at that time. We were very well off in spite of our spiritual lack, which indeed we did not realize, in having the world and the flesh and our own self-sufficiency to lie upon, soothing the cravings of our souls for better things. It is all of this which has come back, now that we have started to live new lives. We have been graciously healed of our infirmity by the Master; therefore let the old bed go; let us forget all about it; leave it for some other poor wretch, who is not yet able to walk in Christ. "Do not give the old couch a second thought," cries the natural man. But the Lord says, "Take up thy bed." His word brings its own fulfilling, and so it comes to pass that we find ourselves bearing about with us in our life as His disciples, these old beds, the lusts of the world, and of the flesh, the cynical unbelief which we really in our heart of hearts detest. Sensitive natures are apt to look upon this enforced bearing of the bed as a nemesis; it is God's judgment upon our past misdeeds. We have been so bad that now we must pay the penalty of it all. That is a discouraging way to look upon our life's temptations after we have given

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ourselves to Christ, and the story of the miracle we have for our consideration to-day ought to teach us differently. It was the Saviour's gracious command that the paralytic who was healed should take up his bed. So we may be sure that it is His gracious purpose for us that we are bidden to take up our beds; to bear again those things in which we found our solace and our stay when we were yet without God. Let us seek that gracious purpose.

IV. It is hard to persuade one's self that there is one. It is so much like having surrendered the condition of a free man for that of a slave. But, surely, the paralytic was a slave; and the poor man with the spirit of infirmity for thirty-eight years, was not he terribly enslaved by that malady? Is it not, however, on the other hand, the part of a slave to have to go about carrying his bed? Is it not, if you please, as if the released convict had now to bear about with him everywhere the heavy chain which once fastened him to the floor of his dungeon? That slavery was borne as a sort of incurable malady, there was a fatalism about it; but what a mockery is freedom from such an evil if one has to take up now the bed upon which he used to lie? Ah, let us not forget the changed conditions. The men whom our Lord healed were proud and glad to give proof of their new found strength by thus bearing their couches for which they had use no longer. So the athlete delights in the immense strength which affords him the opportunity of demonstrating his physical prowess. He does not count it slavery to strive and toil with the wrestlers in the arena; that is his

glory. May it not be that we should thus look upon the carrying of our beds, those remembrances of the old life when we had no strength. The joy of the new strength, that one is *able* to carry his bed, is what we ought to dwell upon, not the strain that it involves. We are more than equal to that.

V. The command, "Take up thy bed," in its practical outcome for ourselves, that is, in the finding as we go on in the Christian life that we have to bear the stress of the old temptations, the assaults of the world, the flesh, and our own evil pride within us, helps us to grasp a very fundamental principle of our sanctification. It is the undoing of what has been done, the making of reparation. We easily recognize this principle in regard to certain forms of transgression which we often meet. A man has stolen something; you say that he is not truly penitent for his theft until he has paid back all he took, or, at least, is honestly endeavouring to pay it back as fast as he can. So in the matter of slander. One has wantonly damaged his neighbour's fair name. Now if he is penitent, he will to the utmost of his ability acknowledge his false accusation as far and wide as possible. One has injured another physically through anger or carelessness. You feel that he is bound so far as he can to do everything to alleviate the condition of his unhappy victim. It is not enough in such cases to protest one's sorrow and one's penitence, to have confessed it all without sparing one's self, there must always be the reparation to the extent of one's ability. And why should not the same be true of all forms of transgression? They

are mostly against God, and yet reparation can be made by our restoring to God that which He once gave us in as perfect condition as we can put it.

(1) Well then, God gave us our moral nature, with soul pure and undefiled. He created for Himself a lovely thing in which He could take delight. Through the unhappy fall of our first parents the humanity He had created became depraved. So we were born in sin. But He graciously overcame all the guilt of that original sin by our Baptism. Then we were started fairly in the pathway which leads to heaven and to Him. Furthermore, we in the Church, you and I, were sanctified, when the time came for us to begin our personal work in His service, by the gift of the Holy Ghost at our Confirmation. There was no excuse for our not preserving the fair treasure of God, our redeemed souls, intact. But we presently suffered the world to come in and absorb our attention; we pursued its glittering baubles until they seemed to us the only things worth pursuing. We cared only for them; for what money and station, popularity and fame could give us; and then we debased our souls, turning the eyes which should have been directed heavenward, to low and ignoble things. We were enslaved by the world. Nor were the passions without their part in the dragging down of God's fair work into the mire. We let them assert themselves; we gave them loose rein; we toyed and trifled with them until they got the upper hand in our life, and the soul was enslaved with their chains also; we thought of self and our own wills; it was pleasant to forget God and to disobey, and to do what

we liked despite the voice of conscience. So we dragged down our better nature from high ideals and thoughts to serve the god of selfishness.

(2) The time of our conversion came, and He set us free from that deplorable slavery. He said to the paralytic, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He brought us back to love and favour, and then bade us take up our beds. In what way? To make reparation, to show within ourselves the undoing of the past. He suffered the evil desires and allurements of the world to return with all their fascination in order that we might in the new strength of our redemption beat them down, re-assert the dominion of the higher nature over the lower, gradually, by hard fighting with that enemy of righteousness, bring back our recreant natures to the condition of hearty loyalty to Him. He allowed the lusts of the flesh to come again as ramping and roaring lions upon the soul so long tolerating, even delighting in their presence, in order that we might by gallant battle with them repair the mischief we allowed them so long to work within us. The hateful self-love, too, was not banished so completely out of our lives that He did not suffer it to come back with its subtle insinuations to persuade us away from true loyalty. It was permitted to assault us still that we might fight it to the bitter end, and by that fighting undo the mischief it had so long wrought in our souls. This taking up the bed is the willing bearing of all those old enemies of our lives, returning after we have renounced allegiance to them to vex us, and allowed by God to do so in order that we may have the glory and the priv-

ilege of repairing the wrong we so long time tolerated.

VI. What a fine, strong conception it gives us of the Christian life here below, this being bidden to take up our beds, to carry now, because we have strength to do it, those deadly creatures which once we found our pleasure in, in order that we may perfect our mastery over them, and so set free our souls from their coils. The dignity and glory of being permitted to put back our lives a little way at least into the place which God meant them to occupy in His service when He called them into being.

(1) Oh the honour of fighting hard day by day consciously to put down the power of the world within us; to make ourselves indifferent to its favours and its delights; to make ourselves hard against its attractions; to become oblivious of its rewards; to be quite careless whether temporal things go well with us or not; to reach that fine, high plane of life of which the Master speaks: "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content," and "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself!"

(2) Oh the glory of coming face to face in the inner places of the soul with the demon of uncleanness, with the base, degrading desire of the flesh, and beating them down mercilessly, till they never venture to rise up again!

(3) Oh the bliss of boldly facing one's own wretched selfishness, and day by day, with stern, un pitying zeal, doing all to crush it! Forcing one's natural ambitions and assertions, our pride and sen-

sitiveness, to be stifled and strangled for lack of room to lift up themselves. It is a rare battle, that of the soul with its old foes, which so long have had their way with it, and now are forced back step by step into their air to be at last slain there. Do not, Oh soul, bewail thy portion because the Master Who has given thee all the strength of heaven, bids thee, "Take up thy bed"; bear along with thee through the world the old temptations, the old cruel enemies of thy spiritual welfare. They are given thee now to conquer and to slay; they are thy spoil, the occasion afforded thee of undoing the mischief of thy past years. It may be indeed that thy victory may not be complete before the hour of death comes; there are brave re-inforcements waiting there to help thee, only waiting that thou mayest give proof of the earnestness of thy warfare. Strong, white angels are ready to perfect in purgatory what is not finished in this world; but thou shalt not lack the hero's crown in the land of life, if thou hast obediently taken up thy bed and carried it all the way to thine house, even to the mansion prepared by Him for thee.

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WORKING, WEAPON IN HAND

"They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded,—every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."—(Nehemiah iv. 17.)

THE Jews in Babylon had been banished from their own fair country seventy years, when in the good providence of God, as foretold by Isaiah more than one hundred and fifty years before, by the hand of Cyrus, king of Persia, they were all set free to return to Jerusalem and to build again the ruined house of God. A worthy leader was found for the glad company which set out at once for Judea, Zerubbabel, of the house of David, and the lawful heir to the ancient throne of David's house; and Zerubbabel was ably seconded by Joshua the high priest. To the treasurer of the little company king Cyrus gave the holy vessels of the house of the Lord, which had so long been laid up as trophies in the temples of the Babylonian deities. With proud exaltation, as soon as they reached Jerusalem, they upreared the ancient altar of the temple, and with great thanksgivings the priests offered thereupon, and they felt that a new era had dawned for their nation. Alas for the vanity of human expectations!

Zerubbabel and Joshua did indeed succeed in rebuilding the temple, but then at once difficulties beset them from the jealousy of the Samaritans, who could not endure the revival of the Jewish power. By complaints to the king of Persia they succeeded for a number of years in putting a stop to the work; nevertheless, at last the house of God was wholly finished and joyously dedicated. Howbeit the Jews themselves speedily fell into lax and careless ways, and their condition was deplorable, until Ezra the scribe, with a fresh party of their countrymen from Babylon, came to revive the national life. Ezra was a devout man, full of the spirit of the old prophets. Although he was entrusted by the king with great treasures for the house of the Lord, he would not accept of any military escort for himself and his few companions, ill able though they were to resist the plundering tribes of the desert. He would not have any escort, he says, "because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him." When he reached Jerusalem Ezra set about great reforms at once, and brought the people to penance for their sins, and to new zeal for the service of God.

I. But the great man and patriot of the Jews of that day was Nehemiah. One of the captivity in Shushan, in the land of Persia, he had risen to great dignity in the royal court, for he was the king's cup-bearer. His heart was touched and grievously troubled by the accounts which came to him of the deplorable state into which the Jews had fallen in

their own country. It was now almost a hundred years since the first party, under Zerubbabel and Joshua had returned to the Holy Land. They had never succeeded in rebuilding Jerusalem, and the temple, though rebuilt, was already falling into decay again, through neglect, and the poverty and misery of the people. For they were oppressed and despoiled in all manner of ways by their godless neighbours, the Samaritans, Sanballat the Horonite with all his crew. Nehemiah laid all of this so much to heart that he determined to ask leave of the king, Artaxerxes, to go to Judea, that he might try to make things better there. He did not act hastily, however, but prayed and fasted over his heart's desire for many days. Then he made his request of the monarch, which was most graciously received, and he was appointed governour of Judea, with large powers to do whatever might be necessary for the welfare of the people. No sooner had Nehemiah arrived in Judea than he perceived with true statesmanship that the first and all-important thing was to rebuild the walls of the holy city. His enthusiasm was infectious; all the Jews, great and small, were enlisted in the work, and in an incredibly short time the walls of Zion began to rise in somewhat of their ancient glory. It was not to be expected that Sanballat and Tobias and Geshem, with the army of the Samaritans, would look on unmoved at the unwonted sight of Jerusalem rising from her ruins. By every act and device they sought to hinder the work, and Nehemiah, knowing full well the danger, pressed on the building with all speed. Yet the enemy did not

scruple to oppose force to the workers, and the Jews found themselves, night and day, exposed to fierce attacks from their adversaries. Nehemiah, not daunted, brought out spears and swords and bows for all his people. The larger part of these weapons of war he committed to a choice company of one-half of his servants that they might hold them close by the men who were building on the wall. But he did not leave the workers themselves unarmed. For those who had to use both hands, more or less, in their work, as the masons, had ever their swords girded on their loins, and as many as could get along with one hand in their work, as the bearers of burdens and those that laded, carried a javelin in one hand, and did their work as well as they could with the other. So strong a front were the Jews thus able to oppose to their enemies even while they were building most diligently, that those malicious ones dared not attack them. One might have thought when the need for a speedy finishing of the work was so urgent, that Nehemiah would have taken some risks and have allowed his people to use both hands in their labours on the wall, but he was too prudent for that. He knew well enough the urgency of his undertaking, so urgent indeed and full of anxiety was it for him that he slept right by the wall, never even putting off his clothes at night, for he knew that a successful attack on the part of Sanballat's host would ruin the cause utterly.

II. One can thoroughly appreciate the persevering labours of those Jews in building up the walls of the holy city, for we are ever ready to praise per-

sistent and patriotic work. We are living in an age which glorifies work, which delights in its practical aims. We have small use in these days for theories and speculative philosophies; we want results. And have we not Scripture on our side, which says that by their fruits we are to know people, and that we must demonstrate our faith by our works? Men praise this or that congregation because it is "*a working church*," and the zealous clergy are ever calling for workers. There is, however, a very distinct tendency to limit the meaning of that word *work* to something done for one's fellow-men, and to leave out of its application things done for God alone. We may urge that God does not need our work for Himself; but the answer to that is, that no more does He need our help in caring for our fellow-men, in order to save them; for He could do that also without our coöperation. He has willed to have us do works of mercy for our fellows, and to spread abroad the Gospel in the world for *our sakes*, not for His, or for other men's. Therefore we ought not to forget that there may be very important work entrusted to us to do for His neighbours. He said of the Magdalene after she had poured upon Him all of that precious ointment of spikenard, "She hath wrought a good work in me." And when carping Judas grumbled because the money had not been kept for the poor, the Master very gently said to His disciples: "The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always"; as if it were not very generous on their part to find nothing to do directly for Him.

(1) This zeal for work as the all-important thing shows itself conspicuously in the tendency to minimize the importance of prayer and of worship. The world sneers at contemplative orders of religious, because they are drones in the human hive; they do no work for their fellow-men, but after supplying their own small temporal needs, they give themselves up to prayer. Of course, if the life of prayer be only an unreality, then they are simply idle and lazy, but I do not believe that there are any Orders of that sort to-day in the Church. The cloistered communities do literally spend the larger part of their time in prayer, praise, and intercession, and they are doing the greatest of all work for God's glory and their neighbour's welfare in so occupying their time, for what agency is so potent for good as prayer? But we have largely lost faith in prayer, and we have come to think over-much of the importance of our work; and so priests neglect their Offices, and their Offering of sacrifice, for the sake of their parish duty, and the religious put off meditation and intercession, in order that they may have more time for the details of their daily teaching and ministering.

(2) We urge that we *must* do our daily tasks. Suppose one must be down town for one's bread-winning at eight in the morning, and cannot get back till nearly eight at night, what time is there for prayer? Not much, I grant you, but such cases are the very ones in which God does not require long prayers, and protracted intercession. Yet we could always get five minutes in the morning, if we cared,

by rising that much earlier. A large part, however, of the work which is allowed to usurp the place of prayer is not of that imperative sort which enthralles the wage-earner. We put God aside for the world only because we feel the world's matters to be more important or more interesting than God's matters. And that is a great mistake. There are professions in which one is liable to be suddenly called away from prayer and meditation, to care for some needy one, whose case is especially urgent, as nursing, or the calling of the physician or of the priest, but these are evidently exceptions. The root of the whole difficulty in the neglect of devotion because of the pressure of work is the false notion of the relative importance of work and of prayer. Nehemiah knew it was more important that the building of the wall should be secured against assailants than that it should go up very rapidly, therefore he greatly weakened the building power of his people by setting a large number of them just to stand on watch, and requiring the greater number of the actual workers to use only one hand in their labour, and to hold a javelin ever ready in the other hand.

(3) There are some that go so far as to maintain that even principle may be surrendered for the sake of accomplishing some glorious work. A great *Ecumenical Conference* of Protestant missionary workers is to be held, and the rulers of the Church are fain to surrender her principles of holding aloof from fraternizing with heresy and schism in order that they may have part in the great movement for non-Catholic missions. See how much good they

do, is the cry, and why should we hold aloof? Because we cannot sacrifice our principles. They may indeed do good, for they are loyal to their principles, and believe in their heresies, and fancy their schism no sin. But we know better, we pray against heresy and schism, and can we fancy that God is going to bless a spurious charity which treats as of no consequence such fundamental matters as the ministry, the creed, and the sacraments?)

III. It may be argued that if we are truly doing God's work, heartily and loyally, we ought to feel that we can trust Him to guard us from danger. If the urgency of the work demands the setting aside of prayer and principle, let us trust Him to make good the deficiency.

(1) When Ezra came up from Babylonia with the treasures supplied by the munificence of the king of Persia and others, he determined not to ask for any armed escort, but to demonstrate the perfect faith which the Jews had in the divine protection by braving the dangers of that inhospitable route of travel. Why could not Nehemiah have trusted in the same way, and have put all his forces on the wall, to build it in half the time that was actually taken for the work? I suppose, first of all, because the danger was plainly then before the Jews in Jerusalem. The army of Sanballat was close beside them. On Ezra's journey the dangers were very possible ones, but there is no word of any actual approach to the little company of pilgrims of any thievish band. Nehemiah felt that God called His people to take what steps they could against the enemy plainly in

view, and then to leave the rest to Him. There is no thought on the part of the true Christian that his prayers and fidelity to religious obligations are in themselves sufficient to baffle the enemy, but that when we do what we can, the divine grace supplies the rest. There is no reason to suppose that the five thousand would have been fed with the five loaves had the Apostles been unwilling to surrender their five loaves. But when they gave all that they had, our Lord made it sufficient.

(2) Our work for God must be the work of a pure heart or it is worth nothing. It is a lesson which it seems almost impossible for us to learn, that the amount of money given or zeal enlisted in the outward work of the Church is of no consequence whatever except as the manifestation of spiritual earnestness and love. It is far more important that we should be engaged in God's service with pure hearts than with strong hands and well-filled purses. It is the integrity of the worker which makes the excellency of the work in the divine eyes, and there can be no integrity of working unless there is a hard and ever-watchful conflict going on between the powers of evil and the soul. Had the armed men not kept watch, and had the builders not all been armed to defend themselves at a moment's warning, the walls of Jerusalem had never been raised in Nehemiah's day.

IV. I venture to think that there is no more important matter for any of us to consider in our individual life work than the keeping of our souls free from taint, and loyally united to our Lord. And because our devotional and sacramental life is

the means whereby this is done, we ought to make it the first consideration in all our thoughts and actions. It is the character of the worker which counts with God always, not the amount of work done, nor the speed with which it is done. It is that alertness to be on the defence against all the assaults of the enemy which makes the walls of Jerusalem rise up in glory in the eyes of the angels and of God Himself.

(1) For great attention given to our spiritual life insures the going forward of the work without break to the end. How often it is true in human experience, perhaps we have tested it in our own, that a large part of the work which one fancies has been done very effectually for God, has to come down because of a fatal flaw in the building. The builder forgot that he was working for God, and thought of his own glory and the praise of men, and so he failed. The army of Sanballat then rushed the defences, and ruin ensued. It is melancholy to have to begin over again, in later life, to conquer some bad habit one had started in to conquer in youth, and then had let it develop again. It is humiliating, though indeed it may be very profitable, to have to begin in one's own life at the bottom again after long years of fancied striving, because one has failed to use the means of grace which are essential to the building up of a Christ-like character. But the scrupulous attention to one's own spiritual state ensures the permanency of whatever building one is erecting for God here in this world.

(2) One surveys one's life work very regretfully, sometimes almost mournfully. One has been so scrupulous about the fidelity to conscience, the battling with one's spiritual foes, that it seems as if hardly anything had been done to the walls of Jerusalem we were charged to build. Other men, our neighbours, have gotten on so much faster, because they took chances against Satan, and did not trouble themselves very much about a high standard of personal living. A poor little low wall is all we have succeeded in raising thus far, and life's sands are nearly run out now. Yet every one of those stones is laid so true and well, in that low wall, that it will stand to eternity, and on such stedfast foundation that it is easy for God to build upon it as He will, fair and stately towers and battlements wherewith to glorify His holy city, and which bring to such feeble souls as ours the undying glory that they were upraised upon foundations which we laid here in this world, working slowly and painfully because we had always to hold a javelin in one hand while we wrought with the other, nevertheless working with such integrity of heart that our building endures in eternity.

MESSENGERS AND MINISTERS

“Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire.”—(Ps. civ. 4.)

THERE are interpreters of Holy Scripture who seem to delight to minimize the spiritual sense of the inspired Word to the utmost; who will take passage after passage which the saints have understood always of the deepest things of God, and explain them in a purely materialistic way. For example, there are the words of our text. There is no doubt that a simple rendering of the word translated “spirits” is *the winds*, and so our commentator who does not care to find any allusion to the angels in the verse, transposes subject and predicate, and reads, “He maketh the winds His messengers” (for the same word means both angels and messengers) “and the flaming fires His ministers”; as someone puts it, “When He used a wind to dry the Red Sea before Israel, and when He sent fire on the cities of the plain.” Unhappily for those who would thus eliminate the notion of the angels and their work from the passage, we have St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, giving the divine interpretation:

“Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.” But then, our modern critics do not let such a little thing as the quotation of a verse in another part of the Bible affect their way of reading that verse in the part they have under view. We however, who believe in the divine inspiration of every part of God’s most holy Word, are abundantly content to hold with the fathers of the Church, and with the Catholic belief of the ages, that the Psalmist in our text is speaking of the holy angels, and of the way in which God avails Himself of their ministrations.

I. At the outset there is found no small difficulty in realizing the existence of the holy angels. They are such spiritual creatures, and so far removed by nature from our mode of being, that it is not strange that we should find it hard to grasp the notion of their personality. Yet we have to meet other difficulties of the same sort, and we believe ourselves to be able to master them. There would be great difficulty in acknowledging the existence of the vast sidereal universe, had we not the darkness of the night in which to view the stars. One could not be persuaded of their being who merely studied the expanse of heaven in the day-time. Nor could we believe as we do about the stars were it not for the facts which a careful and tireless astronomical science has accumulated concerning them. It is most natural to man to behold in the millions of worlds in the sky only countless tiny lamps, burning away there, night after night. He would not ever, as the result of his untutored observation, come to look

upon the fixed stars as giant suns, millions of miles away, and very likely with planetary systems of their own, even as our sun has. Every year our knowledge of the heavens increases, new stars are registered, the investigation continues with constantly improving instruments, and only with the result of showing that the sidercal universe is far more vast and mysterious in its movements than the wildest guesses of the ancients assumed it to be. It is easy to imagine that just as our small globe teems with animal life, so do countless millions of other globes like ours, in the realms of space. It is not a much more difficult thought that in the inter-stellar spaces, or rather behind all the region of outward worlds which we behold, there is a spiritual realm filled with glorious existences, ever thronging the courts of the Lord and King of all creation. And when we reach this point in our imaginings, it does not surprise us to be told by God Himself in Holy Writ, that He has created just such wonderful creatures, in hosts without number, that they are pure and bright, of marvellous intelligence and power, and that they always behold His face and work His gracious will.

II. Being in meditative mood, perhaps, the believer goes on to ask, Why should there be any creatures? They cannot add to the power and the happiness of the Almighty. God must be wholly sufficient unto Himself. It is an idle enquiry, like many others we might make. We shall never find the answer to it in this life. As a matter of fact, however, we are confronted with our own existence.

God has been pleased to make us, and it is not hard to persuade ourselves that He has called us into being in order to give us happiness, and as befits a Giver so great and high as He, not only the happiness of our present existence, but also eternal beatitude in such bliss as passes the power of natural intelligence to conceive. We are egoistic enough to think first of ourselves, but one cannot fail also to note with amazement the prodigality of creature life in myriad types, here upon our earth. One cannot doubt that there is goodness in the gift of life, that the creatures, large and small, in higher type and lower of existence, find a happiness of their own in their being. It is not hard, therefore, for us to accept the fact that the numberless millions of glorious spiritual existences which inhabit all the universe behind the scenes which we are witnessing here in our tiny realm of being, were created that they might be happy. These spirits of the unseen world we call angels, that is, messengers of God. In our text, and elsewhere, the Scripture reminds us that the angels are not only messengers, but also ministers, or servants of God. So the Apostle says, "Are they not all ministering spirits?" I would have you dwell with me, then, upon this double characterization of the holy angels, as the text may give it to us, "He maketh His messengers winds, and His ministers a flame of fire."

(1) And first: the angels as God's messengers are likened to the winds, because in their action, on heaven's messages, they are swift, sudden, unheralded, unrestrained; sometimes gentle as the zephyr's breath, at other times fierce and terrifying as the

tempest. There is most clearly the suggestion of the *instantaneous* character of the angelic message-bearing; as the Psalmist would put it, "He came flying upon the wings of the wind." Thus although the angels mediate, as one may say, they are but the divine breath going forth in carrying out His will, so that His action through them seems immediate, so indescribably swift are they in the execution of His purposes.

(2) Secondly: the angels, as God's ministers, are likened to a flame of fire, because of the exceeding power and energy that are displayed in all that they do in executing the divine behests. The first thought of fire, perhaps, is that of illumination. As the flash of lightning suddenly brings out into startling clearness everything that the blackness of the stormy night has hidden, so do the ministering angels bring out in a moment, by their intervention according to the divine will, the truth of God's government of His kingdom before the eyes of an astonished and terrified world; or it may be to the individual soul, revealing instantaneously the solution of things, the right and the wrong, which just before had been apparently hopelessly confused. The flame of fire ought also to be thought of as purgative, for so it is constantly represented in Holy Writ. The angels in their ministrations are wont to correct the servants of God with sharp correction, though indeed it is ever very loving correction; because they know how grievous a thing sin is, and the awful peril of the soul that continues thoughtlessly in sin, or wilfully in impenitence. The corrections of the heavenly ones,

in their ministrations, are as sharp and burning as the tongue of flame which sears the human flesh. Yet again, fire is eminently an element of vengeful destruction. It is God's angels who at the last day are to gather the wicked, and to bind them in bundles for the awful burning of hell. Often too, in the history of the nations, have they come as God's ministers to take vengeance with the sword of fire upon sinners. It was so in that awful night in Egypt, when the first-born male in every household was smitten; it was so in the host of the king of Assyria, on another memorable night, wherein with one stroke of that fiery weapon an hundred and eighty-five thousand perished. The flame of fire in connection with the angelic host, suggests furthermore the exceeding virtue and efficacy of the angelic ministrations. The angels, in executing the divine behests, display such marvellous powers that one cannot but feel that God is immediately behind them; they serve at once to reveal to us the immensity of the divine power, and to shield us from being overwhelmed by it.

III. And this leads us on, naturally, to a further question: Why should the Most High thus use intermediate agents to do His will among us? There can be no reason why He should not, did He choose to, deal with each one of His creatures immediately. And is not that a truer and lovelier conception of the Almighty? Were it not a happier thing to think of Him as dealing personally, as a Father, with every one of His children, than to have to accept the notion of vast hosts of angelic beings serving as His mes-

sengers and ministers? I venture to think that there is a certain egotism and self-righteous spirit in the man who declares that he will not go to his heavenly Father through any creature-medium, but will speak with Him and deal with Him face to face.

(1) For in the first place, the Creator is too holy to be looked upon by any creature in whom is the least taint of sin. None but absolutely spotless ones can stand His sight. The angels are spotless. Such imperfection as they have in His eyes, as the book of Job reminds us, is that of undeveloped wisdom. He charged His angels with folly, that is, He suffered them not to forget that there were many things they did not know, things which they even yet desire to look into, and which they shall know at the last day, but not now. Nevertheless the angels are wholly pure from taint of sin. Those of them who transgressed were, in the first instant of their rebellion, cast out of heaven, and are paying the penalty of their disobedience in hell; while those who persevered in loyalty were made steadfast in their holiness eternally. "Without holiness," the Scripture says, "no man shall see the Lord." Therefore while we are yet in the sinful state of this world we cannot hope to deal directly with God, as those who see Him face to face.

(2) We may indeed cry, "Our Father"; for it is not as if there were any direct hindrance to our approach to the divine Throne, but it must be through the help of those whom God has appointed to help us. Of course, preëminently, this means our Lord Christ, through Whom alone anyone can have access

to the Father. And indeed, our Lord Christ is Himself God, yet in His Godhead we must come to Him through His human nature. We ought never to look upon the vehicles of our approach to God as barriers; the bridge that bears one over the chasm is not a hindrance but a help to the wayfarer, and the road that leads him through the forest is blessed by him as something that has been of the greatest service. So the angelic ministrations between man and God are not obstacles interposed to our free approach to our heavenly Father, but the stairs by which we mount up to His palace. The angels are represented in Holy Writ as bearing up the prayers of God's people; another angel offers them with much incense; thus we are never permitted to forget that we cannot have immediate and complete entrance into the presence of the Most High until we are wholly purged of sin.

(3) It is also to be remembered that the ministrations of the angels to the children of men are only for the days of their imperfection. When their judgment has been passed, and souls are made perfect in holiness, there will be no need for angelic ministrations to them. Those who are perfect in holiness shall themselves see the Lord face to face, and shall in sharing the life of their Master Christ, be even more glorious than the angels. But just because the angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, it is reasonable to believe that their benevolent work for their charges goes on after the soul has left the body and in purgatory is made ready for the Beatific Vision. It is certain at least that the

guardian angels of the faithful are not relieved from their duty until they have brought their human wards into the very presence of God Himself.

IV. So far as we have gone, we might be thought to be considering only Old Testament conditions, as one may say, before our Lord came into the world. That coming made an immense difference in the relation of fallen man to his Maker. Of the Lord in His incarnation it was said, "Thou madest Him lower than the angels, to crown Him with glory and worship." But just as soon as He had paid the price of redemption, then in his human nature He became infinitely greater than the angels, exalted as *man* to be their Lord and King. Thus, too, in His humanity did He become, in the fullest sense, *our angel*, the messenger of God, revealing the fulness of truth, the minister of God, supplying the richness of all grace to His loyal ones. One might at first fancy that His entrance into the world would supersede the function of the angels in going and coming between God and the children of men. On the contrary, we perceive the angels still retaining their old offices of messenger and minister of the Most High, in natural things, but we see also our Lord establishing a new kingdom, the temporal kingdom of His Church, in which He Himself reigns as divine, and certain of the sons of men are made His messengers and ministers in supernatural things. It is not to be forgotten that He no sooner makes plain to our race the fact that divinity lies hidden under the veil of His humanity, than He withdraws Himself, ascending into heaven from sensible contact

with us. We may long and sigh for the old familiar days of which we read, in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, but they are never to come back. He has not truly withdrawn Himself from the most intimate relationship with us, but He has put that relationship upon a *supernatural* basis, in which we are helpless to reach up to Him save as He first reaches down to us. And this reaching down in supernatural communion with His children, He effects through human messengers and ministers, even as He deals with us in the natural realm through His angels. It is of His priests, taken from among the children of men, that He says: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

(1) He maketh His messengers winds. So we have a right to think of the clergy as inspired from on high for their sacred function. It is the old story of the "rushing mighty wind" of Pentecost. He "breathed" on them when He said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Thus they became the bearers of His message; their voice, when they speak of that message, the voice of the Holy Ghost, with the might and convincing sweetness of the wind of heaven behind it. What is so cogent as the Gospel message, what more mysterious and subtle than its moving power!

(2) He maketh His ministers a flame of fire. They kindle the heavenly spark in Baptism, for then an immortal soul is born into the kingdom of heaven. They illuminate through the seven-fold gift of the Holy Ghost, in Confirmation. By their hands the heavenly flame, at the utterance of the divinely given

words, falls upon the bread and wine, and they become the Body and Blood of the Lord. Through their agency the divine fire purges the souls of penitents in the tribunal, and cleanses them with the heavenly absolution. To the ministers of His Church is entrusted by the Master that most solemn of gifts of flame, the power to deliver wilful and impenitent sinners over into the avenging fires of the nether world. Truly He has made them a flame of fire.

V. It is no small and unneeded lesson that we may learn from the ministry of the angels as it is revealed to us in Holy Writ. We are ever fain to claim what we like to think is the prerogative of our creation, and to demand unrestricted approach to the presence of our Father in heaven. He cannot be so approached by sinful creatures. Were we un-fallen, as Adam in paradise, it might be so, but not now. Therefore He wills to deal with us through His angels, making His messengers winds, and His ministers a flame of fire. We persist at least that in our Lord Christ we have free access to the Father, nevertheless, here again we find it to be the law of the kingdom that only through vital union with the Master, His followers can find perfect liberty of approach, and this vital union is to be attained through the use of those agencies of grace, the holy sacraments, which He has entrusted to His Church to be dispensed by her clergy, making those clergy His messengers and His ministers. "Let a man," says the Apostle, "so account of us as of the ministers of Christ; and stewards of the mysteries of God."

VI. Instead of seeking to claim that to which we have no right, for all we can hope for is but of His grace, shall we not rather lift up our hearts in rejoicing at the wonderful mercies of our God, Who, because we needed messengers and ministers, has given us the bright hosts of the angelic race in natural things, and the priests of His Church in things supernatural, making poor, finite men to be His messengers filled with the divine breath of the Holy Ghost, and His ministers a flame with the mysterious powers of heaven's own life?

THE WAY OF BEATITUDE

“They will go from strength to strength; and unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion.”—(Ps. lxxxiv. 7.)

THE life of our Lord in His human nature has in it four distinct stages, which may be regarded, in a mystical way, as typical of the life of His followers in their effort to attain to perfect likeness of Himself. There was first His natural life upon earth before His passion, in which He lived as we live, and was tempted in all points like as we are, though remaining without sin. There was after that the life in hades. After His death on Good Friday His soul descended into hell, and remained there until Easter morning. Yet again, as the third stage in His human existence, we have the great forty days after He arose from the dead in all the power of the resurrection; yet not yet availing Himself of that, as we may say, but tarrying before He should ascend into heaven, not only to give infallible proofs of His resurrection to His followers, but also that He might speak with them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Then, as the final stage in

what we may call His human living, He reigns in heaven at the right hand of the Father, until He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, till all enemies are subject unto Him, and He shall deliver up the mediatorial kingdom, its work being fulfilled, unto God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. Of course it is true that our Lord shall ever retain His human nature in heaven, where it will be His glory, and the joy and pride of His saints, yet His work in His human nature will be at an end when the last great day of the final judgment shall have passed.

I. These four stages in the Master's human career typify and illustrate the processes by which the human creature is to mount to beatitude. On this All Saints' festival we are made to contemplate the fact that human beings like ourselves, though of course much holier than we, have ascended into the very presence of God, and are now beholding His face. It is a stupendous problem in evolution. How can fallen man hope to become a fair, white saint, such as are those blessed ones, a countless host of them, too, in paradise. Let us seek to understand the problem as Holy Writ and God's Church set it before us.

II. The first stage of the human soul's march heavenward may be called the *probation*. It corresponds to the period of our Lord's natural life of thirty-three years upon earth before His passion. We might be ready to think that we did not start in life with the full powers and possibilities that ought to be ours, forasmuch as we are handicapped by our

inheritance of Adam's fallen nature. We do not begin our life story in any garden of Eden. No, nor did our Lord. But, we say, He at least was free from original sin. And that is just what our religion tells us was the result for us of our Baptism when we were infants; by it we are freed from the guilt of original sin, although we had been born in it. If we protest that we are not freed from the motions of the sinful lusts of the world, and flesh, and devil, we may remember that our Lord allowed Himself to be subjected to the same assaults of the Evil One, though in His case they must be from without, they could not be from within, as if He were susceptible as we to their poison. In no way did He shun the keenest and most severe of our human trials. Our Baptism washed our souls clean from all the guilt of original sin, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, then supplied to us, made us supernaturally strong to overcome all the lust of the flesh which yet remained in us in the way of seduction to sin.

(1) Our baptismal innocency and supernatural vitality were brought to maturity that we might successfully pass our probation, by our Confirmation and first Communion. For God's gifts of grace are not unreal things, but a veritable spiritual armor and heavenly sustaining food, so that the confirmed Christian who has just partaken of the Lord's Body and Blood at the altar is much more than a match in conflict for Satan with all his host, even with his allies of the world, the flesh, and pride, which lurk in their lusts within us.

(2) Throughout the rest of our earthly career there remains that power of supernatural grace sustained and developed in us, if we will have it so. It becomes merely a matter of our own loyalty or disloyalty whether we conquer or succumb in the fight with sin. We have the means freely at hand if we will avail ourselves of them. There is no sin that absolution will not heal if there be penitent confession while we are here on earth, there is no needed grace or help which Holy Communion fails to provide, if we but approach the altar devoutly and with the preparation which God requires of us. The whole of Christian living resolves itself into the continuing in the state of grace. We unhappily fall from it by wilful sin; happily we can recover ourselves by the honest use of Penance. We are weak, indeed, in our natural strength, but we may become strong as lions to fight upon the Lord's side by faithful and systematic use of Holy Communion. And this is the whole of our duty to be saints, while we are here in this present world, the constant effort to keep ourselves ever in the state of grace that when our end shall come, suddenly or expected, we shall be found to be on the Lord's side.

III. Following the stage of probation, in the way of beatitude, comes the stage of *purgation*. One naturally thinks of it in connection with our Lord's three days in hades. He went down into Satan's gloomy realm in order that He might spoil it, first binding that Evil One with a great chain for a thousand years, then setting free all his captives who had loved and served the Most High before their

Redeemer came into the world. In the hour of death the battle with the Evil One has come to an end for the believer. The body which has had its part to play as the tenement of the soul, now all seamed and marred, unfit for existence in a higher sphere of being, is planted, as it were, in the ground, after God's wonderful fashion of husbandry, that when the great springtime of the resurrection shall come it may revive again, made over in its new form and powers, fitted still to be the dwelling place of the transformed soul which is once more to inhabit it. But that soul, stripped of the covering of flesh, stands naked before its Lord to be judged. We are not concerned to-day to dwell upon the unhappy fate of the lost. There will be lost souls, one cannot but fear a great many of them, in the day of their judgment, of whom it may be said, It were good for them if they had never been born. But the souls which are found by the all-knowing Judge in the state of grace, are committed to kind angel hands, which bear them away to that place, "under the earth," as the Scriptures represent it, where the work of preparing them for the paradise of the saints must be done.

(1) All tainted and maimed by the struggles in which they have been engaged—and which of us has not many times already in his life lapsed lamentably?—they are to be healed and purified. Purgatory must be a place of more or less soul-pain, because we cannot overcome the false and evil ways in which we have lived without sharp correction of the habits so formed. It is like our earthly hospitals

for the diseases of the body. They are the most beneficent of all institutions, full of blessings to mankind, and yet institutions where pain and suffering are ever to be found, for cures may not be worked without involving more or less of these. Happily it is true that in our earthly hospitals there are all manner of gracious alleviations of pain, and many most comforting things experienced there. Who has not known patients, after their going forth from some well managed hospital to say, I was very happy there, though of course I had to endure much pain and discomfort while I was being treated? So we may surely believe the blessed dead in purgatory are very happy there, though they must endure their pains, and perhaps very sharp ones. They know that the pains are healing pains, they know that eternal bliss is surely theirs; they are glad to suffer a little while in the consciousness of the unspeakable joy that suffering is fitting them for, as some child paralytic is told that the operation is going to make him strong and well like his fellows. They must be built up, too, in the fulness of that heavenly vigour which ought to have been theirs as the outgrowth of their Baptism, and of all the sacraments they have since received, but which, alas, they never appropriated, suffering themselves to grow weak and stunted in spiritual things through failure to avail themselves of that which God had provided for them. All this lost ground must be recovered in purgatory.

(2) We may not see or speak with our faithful dead in that country of purgation, even as in the earthly hospital it is often not permitted to their

friends to see patients who are being treated there, not from any harshness, but because the conditions require such restrictions. So we may not even hear from our dear ones who have gone out into the world of purgation; nevertheless we know that they are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. The agencies which chasten and cure them are not diabolic but angelic ones, in the persons of very loving nurses, and very wise physicians who make no mistakes, nor are ever guilty of the least harshness of treatment, who ever minister to them. And you and I, left upon earth, after the venerable custom of God's holy Church in all ages, lift up our voice daily in supplication for them that they may find, in the time of their purging, constant refreshment, light, and peace. We do not know exactly in what way these petitions of ours affect those dear ones, yet it is certain that they bring them some very real happiness, and it may be a shortening of their stay in that waiting world.

IV. The third stage in the way of the saints is that of *beatitude*. When at length the gracious, healing work of purgatory is quite finished, the souls of the faithful, all free from every spot of sin, and endowed with the glorious gift of supernatural holiness, are ushered by their angelic guardians into paradise. It is, in a certain way, like the stay of our Lord upon earth after His resurrection for forty days, though of course in another sense very different from that. Our Lord took again His body on Easter Day, but the blessed in heaven now, with a few exceptions, probably, have not their bodies. I

say a few exceptions, because it seems reasonable to believe that those saints who took again their bodies after the Lord had risen at Jerusalem, and who went into the holy city and appeared unto many, did not after thus bearing witness, have to lay aside once more their bodies, but were allowed to retain them, and to ascend in them with the Master when His forty days of waiting were ended. It has been piously believed, too, by a very large part of the Church, that the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of our Lord, was so honoured also, because of her singular holiness. We may naturally believe, however, that such of the blessed in heaven as have already been given their bodies, have them rather as marks of the divine favour and honour, than that they may delight in them as the righteous are to do after the great day of the final judgment. Just as the Lord, during those forty days after His resurrection, was speaking to His followers of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, so we may understand the saints now in paradise to be chiefly concerned with the welfare of the Church on earth. I mean that while they are supremely happy, and are looking upon the face of God unceasingly, they are concerned rather with the progress of the Master's kingdom than with their own delight in the joys of paradise. We must not forget that until evil is wholly put down, until the last great day of judgment has come, the Church on earth is at warfare with the powers of hell. The issue of the conflict cannot be doubtful, but the vicissitudes of it are very many. We who are fighting the fight upon earth, cannot but be often

greatly anxious for the outcome of that part of the struggle in which we are personally engaged. The saints in heaven cannot be anxious, but they are absorbingly interested in the mighty warfare. They may be thought of as onlookers in the galleries of some great arena, wholly absorbed in the desperate strife which is going on at their feet. They are crying out their words of encouragement, they are interposing their powerful intercession with the Lord Who is in their midst that He will thus and thus order the battle. It is a part of the celestial privilege that everyone there beholds the face of the Most High, while yet greatly concerned with the affairs of human souls. It is expressly told us that it is so with the guardian angels of God's little ones on earth. Perhaps we are to understand that the blessed saints have their part also in the great conflict between the powers of hell and righteousness, through their beholding the face of God; that therein they see mirrored everything in the affairs of men that it is the will of their Lord they should know. It may well be that He is pleased to hide from them the wretched failures and wilful follies of those who are their dear ones upon earth, because it cannot be that any grief can come nigh their hearts; they can see and know only those things which give them joy. Yet it may also be that those who have reached that exaltation of beatitude, are no longer able to feel grief or sorrow. They understand so well the gracious workings of the divine providence, that all things are perceived to be working for good in the Master's kingdom, and therefore they can have only

joy in everything that goes on upon earth. We must not forget, however, that they are supremely interested in our matters, and being centered in their being upon our Lord, it is not hard for them to know that His will is always good, and in that knowledge they cannot but rejoice in all things here on earth as they work out the glory of His name. As with the prayers which we offer for the faithful in purgatory, we are here in ignorance as to what those prayers can effect in the condition of our dear ones there, so with the prayers which we make to the saints, that they will intercede for us and help us by all the means in their power, we do not know just what the petitions of those blessed ones can obtain for us; but since we are assured that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man here upon earth avails much, we cannot doubt that the intercessions of those purified ones in glory are of the greatest profit to our souls. We have the fullest warrant of Catholic tradition for invoking the prayers of the blessed ones in paradise.

V. When the Master had finished His great forty days' work after His resurrection, He ascended into heaven to take the crown and kingdom over the universe in His humanity, ruling until He should subdue all the power of evil, in order at last to give up the kingdom to the eternal Father, that God might be all in all. The blessed saints in heaven have not yet attained to the full perfection of their glory, there remains for them their perfect *consummation* both in body and soul. For although there may be, as I have said, some which already

have their bodies, for the greater part their bodies shall not be received until the last great day, that is the eternal springtime when the fruit of God, so long lying in the ground, shall uplift its head above the earth and show itself in all its glory. We cannot imagine the loveliness of the bodies of the saints in that resurrection morning. They shall be like their Lord. The theologians tell us of four different qualities of the Lord's body as risen from the dead. It is *impassible*, never capable of any more suffering, pain, or sorrow. It cannot grow old or decay, or in the greatest length of ages draw any nearer dissolution; it is as eternal as the soul. So the bodies of the saints shall be found impassible, never more to fail, or suffer, or grow old. In perennial youth, or rather in the fulness of the prime of absolutely perfected physical life, they shall endure in the æons of eternity. The Lord's body was also subtle and agile, as it rose from the dead, no longer hampered by what we call laws of matter, the physical limitations of our present world state. Light as the air, subtle as the spirit itself, unhindered by any obstructions, free to go where they will, and with the speed of the lightning flash, the bodies of the saints in heaven shall delight in the ever joyous discoveries of the wealth of the universe. Furthermore, the Lord's body when He rose from the dead was endowed with supernatural radiance and heavenly glory. It is very likely that He did not ordinarily show this to His faithful ones as He went in and out among them during the great forty days; nevertheless, it was the natural manner of His flesh after

He had risen from the dead, thus to shine with the radiance of heaven. It is certain that the bodies of the saints shall be refulgent and glorious at the last day, even as the Master showed His body to be on the mount of transfiguration. In these lovely, impassible, subtle, agile, shining bodies, the souls of the saints shall, in the resurrection, find vehicles worthy of all the aspirations of their nature. The power of sin wholly put down, there will be no occupation for them but that blissful one of which no holy one can weary, of following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. It is the bliss which passeth understanding.

VI. There are quiet times of deep, inward self-communing which come to everyone more or less frequently in his life, especially when many dear ones have been taken away, and he begins to look upon the world to come as the country that is to be desired, rather than this one in which we now live. At such times the mind turns instinctively to the things that lie beyond the veil of the grave, and to the state of our own departed ones there. The Church does not leave us in doubt about the pathway which leads to beatitude, and the stages of its progress. Immediately upon death follows some sort of judgment at which the departed soul is received as one of God's elect, or sent forth into outer banishment among the lost. The souls of the saved are graciously taken in hand by God's holy ones, and by loving, though it may be painful ministrations, cleansed of every stain and spot, and little by little built up into supernatural holiness. Then, when the all-seeing eye shall pronounce them wholly

fit, they are ushered into the realms of the blest, and look upon the face of God, ravished indeed by the vision, but not consumed. Still there in paradise they have their part to play in the great work of the Master in putting down all the rebellious opposition of the Evil One. At last, that work done, the great day of the final awarding is reached, and the happy soul restored to the fulness of its glory in the radiant resurrection body, shall enter into the joy of its Lord in endless beatitude.

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